

GAME FACE

INDIANS SCOREBOOK MAGAZINE

OFFICIAL PROGRAM



OCTOBER 3-4, 1995



JACOBS FIELD

\$8.00



Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdson

Special thanks to everyone who assisted the Advertising/Publications Staff of the Indians in the development of this publication.
Graphic design by the Cleveland Indians, printed by Perlmutter Printing Company. Cover art by ZZ Design. Photo by Gregory Drezdson. For details on cover, please see page 69.
The 1995 Indians Game Face Magazine is published by the Cleveland Indians Baseball Company Limited Partnership, Jacobs Field, 2401 Ontario Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44115-4003.
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8 Major League Excitement... *by Liz Lucey; Illustrations by ZZ Design*

The excitement of the movie "Major League" left many Clevelanders saying "Wouldn't it be great if..." Indians fans have been waiting for a winner since 1954, and now their loyalty is paying off. In 1995, post-season play has again stormed through Cleveland and Tribe fans of all ages are having the time of their lives!

16 Top Ten Best Hitting Teams *by Jack DeVries; Illustrations by ZZ Design*

Super slugging teams have always been in the spotlight since the very beginning of professional baseball, but how would today's Tribe hitters match up as a club against the best of the best? We picked the top ten All-Time best hitting clubs. The information is all there—you decide for yourself.

36 Caught In The Act... *by Tom Bochenek*

Get the inside scoop on the dedication Cleveland Indians players have shown toward the community and others who look up to them. Many spend their off-hours visiting schools, hospitals, playgrounds and churches. They're a hit all over Cleveland, on and off the field.

60 A Wild Finish

Baseball's new playoff format had several clubs fighting for a place in the post-season even in late September. Here's a record of the teams, including rosters and stats.

46 One For The Books... *by Jim Ingraham*

This has been a year of Triumphs. Relive every exciting moment of a truly "memorable" season, from Spring Training through "the clinch."

1995 Cleveland Indians	91	Kids Stuff	44
1995 Indians Team Photo	42	Memorable Moments	7
1996 Season Schedule	8	Minor Leagues	30
About The Cover	69	Minor League Mania	5
Baerga On Fashion	5	On Deck	6
Bottom Of The Ninth	136	Opponents Rosters	63
Broadcasters	122	Outta Site!	6
Caught On The Fly	30	Photo Gallery	129
Community Relations	56	Radio/TV Network	126
Concessions	24	Scoring Blocks Scorecard Insert	
Fan Conduct	28	Scouting	22
How To Score Scorecard Insert		Seating Diagram	20
Indians Roster	64	Seventh Inning Stretchers	68
Instant Replay	6	Ticket Information	8
Jacobs Field Facts	26		



Dear Baseball Fan:

Welcome to Jacobs Field and Cleveland Indians Baseball!

Our fans have been a key part of our success this year, providing an electrifying environment that has helped to bring out the best in our ballplayers. We truly appreciate your support and are working hard to give you plenty more to cheer about.

When my late brother, David, and I bought this franchise in late 1986, we promised to rebuild the foundation of the ballclub and to build an exciting, winning team by making long-term commitments to our community, to our players and most importantly, to *you*. At the heart of the "Blueprint for Success" was the development of a largely homegrown, top-quality nucleus around which future success would be built.

This outstanding season has been the product of that strategy. Our ballclub's thrilling performance on the playing field has brought enjoyment to fans here at our Ballpark and far beyond.

We are extremely proud to represent Cleveland in post-season play for the first time in more than a generation. Whatever the outcome, we all have ample reason to stand up and cheer.

Now, *enjoy the show!*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard E. Jacobs".

Richard E. Jacobs



Gregory Drezdson

CLEVELAND
Indians

ON DECK

Batting Tips by Charlie Manuel...

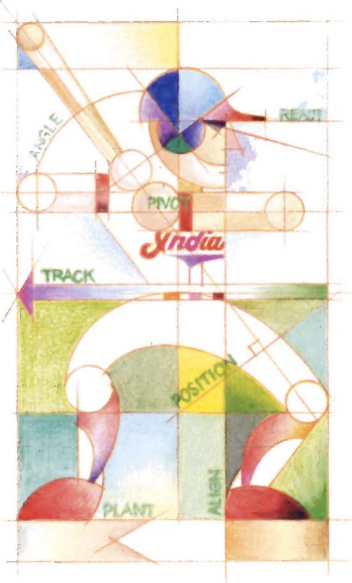
One of the most important, and probably the most often poorly executed plays in baseball is the bunt.

Do not step up to get both feet together. This move will make you commit to the bunt too early. Start with your back foot, turning on the ball of your foot. Do not move your back foot forward, but pivot the upper part of your body while moving your bat out over the plate.

Your arms should not be extended, but should be slightly bent and relaxed. Hold your bat loosely and don't jab at the ball. Let the ball come to you. As in hitting, make sure you have a good ball to bunt. Also, aim for the foul lines.

Both drag and push bunting are an important part of the game and should be practiced often, especially by the light hitting player who, with a little speed, may be able to use a good bunt or two in a ballgame to help him become a better player.

As in anything, the more you practice, the more you'll learn to control your bunts.

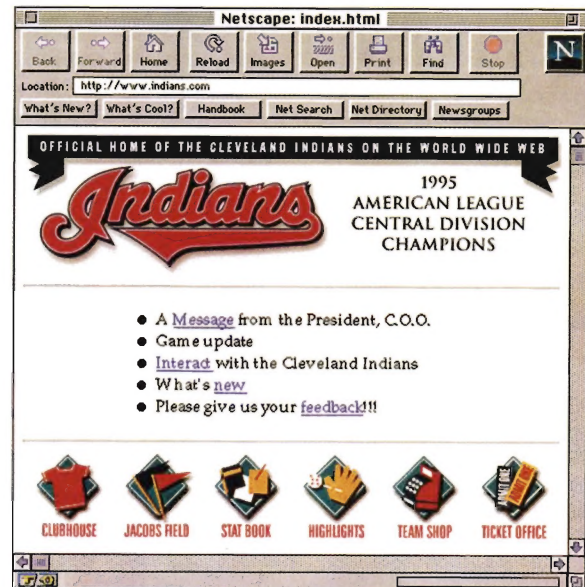


"snickers"

"You've got to remember—I'm 73." — Ty Cobb, on why he felt he could only hit .300 against modern pitching.

"Statistics are to baseball what a flaky crust is to mom's apple pie." — Harry Reasoner.

From "Baseball Shorts" by Glenn Liebman. Copyright 1994; Published by Contemporary Books, Inc.



OUTTA SITE!

Get access to the latest with the Indians on the Internet...

The Cleveland Indians just got "webbed," and now everyone can get in on the action—any time!

The Indians Internet web site features stats, interactive forums, on-line shopping, a "CyberTribe" club and special trivia items.

The Home Page above welcomes Indians fans to www.indians.com. The "CyberTribe" page introduces the team's free on-line, members-only club.

In addition, there are several skill levels of team trivia for everyone from the ultimately informed to the sports novice. There is even a special Slider's Kid Trivia level for the younger cyber freaks.

You can also access the latest in game notes and information on what's happening in the clubhouse.

So pull up your keyboard and get linked up with the hottest new site on the net!

Instant Replay



Memorable Moments...

We asked Tribe coaches to share the moments in their careers that really stand out in their minds. Here's what they had to say...

Dave Nelson

"I've had some big days in the Majors, like when I hit two home runs in a game vs. the White Sox in 1973 off Wilbur Wood and Eddie Fisher. Or when I found I was named to the 1973 AL All-Star team, but those achievements aren't my most memorable."

"My most memorable day in baseball was at Cleveland Stadium. I was a rookie about to play in my first Major League game. My mom and dad came to Cleveland to see me make my debut. When they announced the starting lineups and called my name, I remember looking into the stands and seeing the smiles on their faces. I'll remember that moment forever."

Dan Williams

"My most memorable moment was making it to the big leagues in 1993. I had been working in Class-A ball and made the big jump to the Majors. I was told to report to the Metrodome in Minnesota, and the first thing I saw when I walked in the ballpark was Dave Winfield taking batting practice. Seeing Dave right off the bat, one of the greatest players in the game, let me know that I finally made it."

Jeff Newman

"My most memorable moment has to be the day I was called up to the big leagues. I wasn't expecting it at all."

I was playing in Salt Lake City, UT, and for some reason, I remember taking a pair of pants to the tailor that morning to get them altered. I got a call in my hotel room at 8:00am from my manager, Harry Bright. When I got to his room he said, 'Jeff, we've got a flight to Texas for you,' I'm from Texas, so I thought I was being released. I said, 'Harry, what did I do to deserve this?' He said, 'Jeff, I thought you wanted to go to the big leagues.' I didn't realize I was being called up by the Oakland Athletics to play against the Rangers in Texas."

Mark Wiley

"Until September 8, when we clinched the division, my most memorable moment was when I signed my first contract. I was the #2 pick in 1970 and signed my first contract with the Twins. I was signed by the same scout who signed Jack Morris. My college coach and my father were both there. It was a very proud moment."

However, without a doubt, Friday, September 8 tops it all!"

Charlie Manuel

"In 1979, while I was playing in Japan for the Kintetsu Buffaloes,

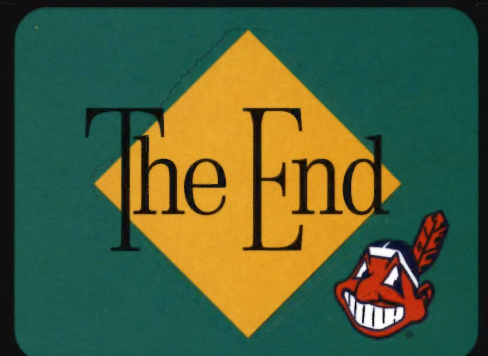
I got hit in the face with a pitch and broke my jaw in 10 places. My jaw was wired shut and all the doctors I saw told me not to play, but I wouldn't listen. The last day of the season, I hit a three-run home run that put us into the Nippon series. Of the nine runs we scored in the game, I drove in eight, all with my jaw wired shut."

Luis Isaac

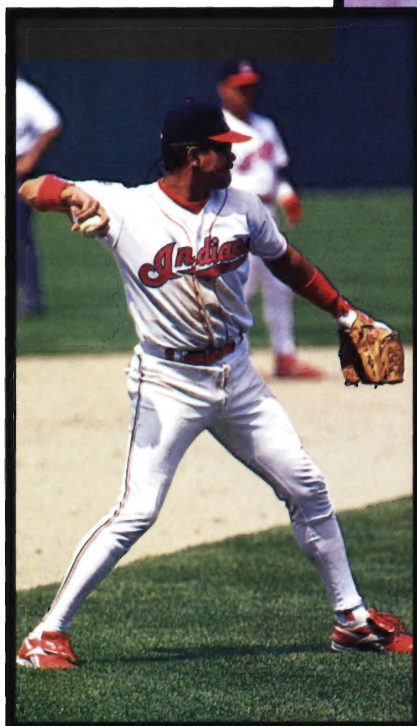
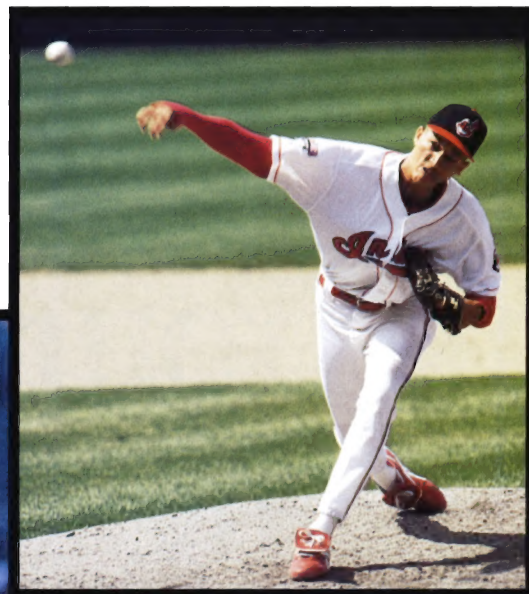
"My greatest day in baseball was the day I finally made it to the Majors as a coach. I was third base coach at Burlington and got a call from Joe Klein (GM) to report to the Hyatt in Chicago. That's all they said. In Chicago, there was a room for me at the Hyatt, but still no explanation as to why I was there. I thought I was going to be fired. The next morning, I was told to report to another room. There, Joe Klein told me I was going to be the new Indians bullpen coach."

Buddy Bell

"My most memorable day has to be my first big league game at Cleveland Stadium in 1972. I made the team out of spring training and couldn't wait to play in my first official game. We were playing Milwaukee and my parents came to watch my debut. I remember that I went 0-for-4, but that's not a happy memory. Still, that game sticks out in my mind more than any other."



Caught On The Fly...



TRIBE BY MONTH

Month	Record	Overall Record
April	2-2	2-2
May	19-7	21-9
June	20-8	41-17
July	18-9	59-26
August	21-9	80-35
*Sept.	9-4	89-39

* Records through 9/13/95.

DID YOU KNOW...

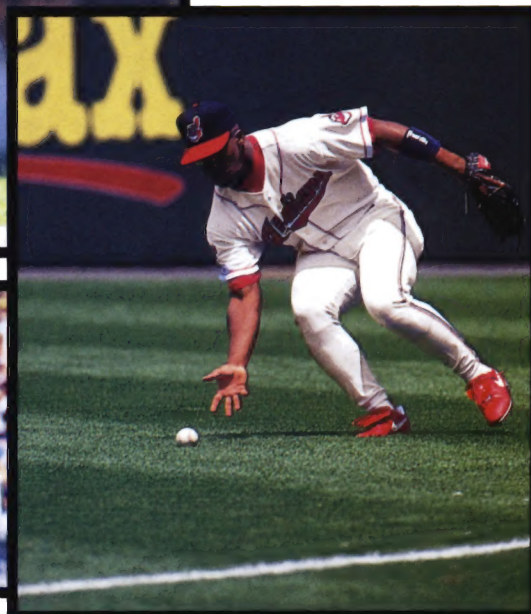
The October issue of "Money" Magazine has declared the Cleveland Indians the "best fan value in sports."

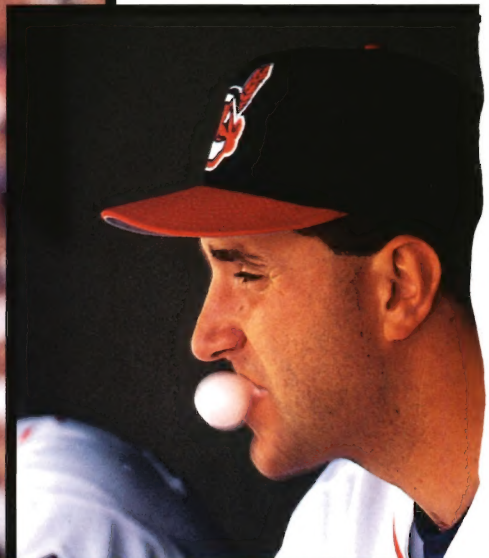
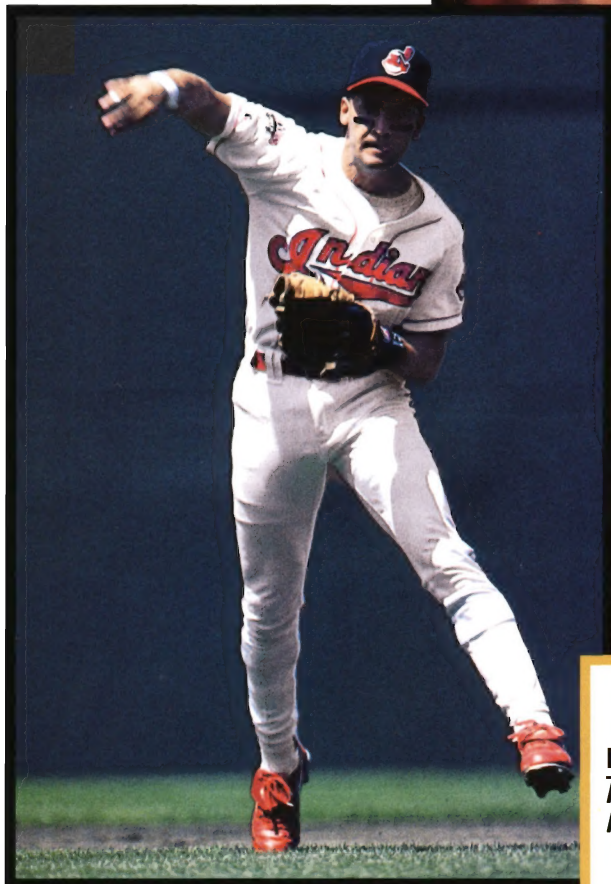
Eighty professional baseball, football and basketball franchises were rated. (Last year, the Tribe ranked fourth, while the Dallas Cowboys were #1).

TEAM RECORD BREAKDOWN

	Home		Road		Totals	
	W	L	W	L	W	L
Shutouts	6	2	3	1	9	3
SHO - Individual	3	1	0	0	3	1
Extra Innings	8	0	4	0	12	0
One-run Decisions	17	2	9	11	26	13
Two-run Decisions	7	5	7	1	14	6
vs. LH Starters	11	7	12	7	23	14
vs. RH Starters	37	9	28	16	65	25
Grass Fields	48	16	31	18	79	34
Artificial Fields	0	0	9	5	9	5
Day Games	11	4	14	7	25	11
Night Games	37	12	26	16	63	28

All statistics as of 9/13/95

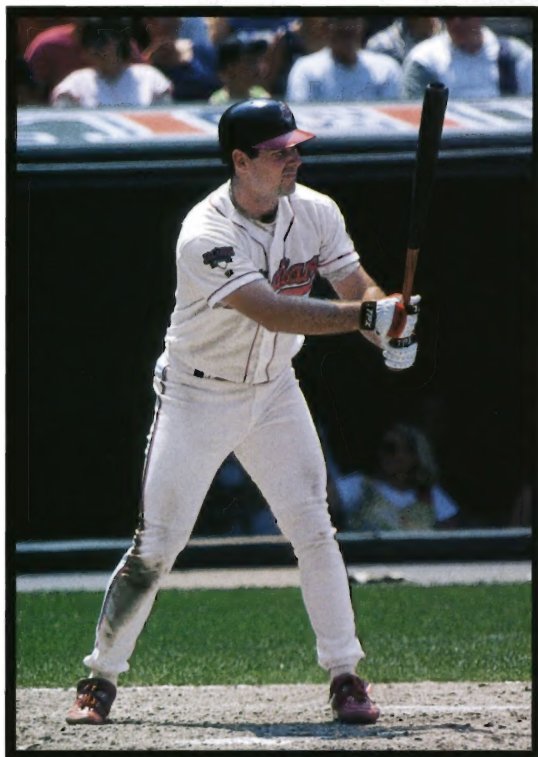




CLEVELAND INDIANS TEAM BATTING

Player	Avg.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Alomar, S	.275	56	167	24	46	5	0	8	30	5	22	1
Amaro, R	.178	20	45	5	8	2	0	1	5	4	4	1
RIGHT	.156		32		5	1	0	1	3	1	3	
LEFT	.231		13		3	1	0	0	2	3	1	
Baerga, C	.315	125	515	83	162	26	2	15	81	33	30	10
RIGHT	.331		136		45	12	1	4	25	15	8	
LEFT	.309		379		117	14	1	11	56	18	22	
Belle, A	.312	127	487	100	152	48	1	36	105	65	71	4
Espinoza, A	.240	55	100	11	24	4	0	1	15	2	13	0
Kirby, W	.206	92	175	27	36	9	2	1	13	11	31	9
Lofton, K	.311	101	424	78	132	21	12	7	49	29	45	36
Murray, E	.321	99	383	60	123	19	0	16	71	36	59	5
RIGHT	.258		97		25	4	0	3	16	6	17	
LEFT	.343		286		98	15	0	13	55	30	42	
Pena, T	.242	83	244	21	59	14	0	4	24	14	44	0
Perry, H	.336	39	128	17	43	9	1	3	20	8	22	0
Ramirez, M	.316	123	433	81	137	24	1	31	98	70	100	6
Sorrento, P	.236	95	297	47	70	14	0	22	72	49	69	1
Thome, J	.317	120	391	80	124	26	1	22	61	90	92	4
Vizquel, O	.264	123	497	78	131	23	0	6	47	50	56	25
RIGHT	.253		154		39	11	0	2	15	14	21	
LEFT	.268		343		92	12	0	4	32	36	35	
Winfield	.202	39	99	11	20	5	0	2	4	13	23	1
CLEVELAND	.287	127	4419	725	1269	249	20	175	696	484	685	103
OPPONENTS	.256	127	4381	533	1120	239	13	122	497	399	825	105
DH	.295	127	485	78	143	24	0	18	80	59	84	7

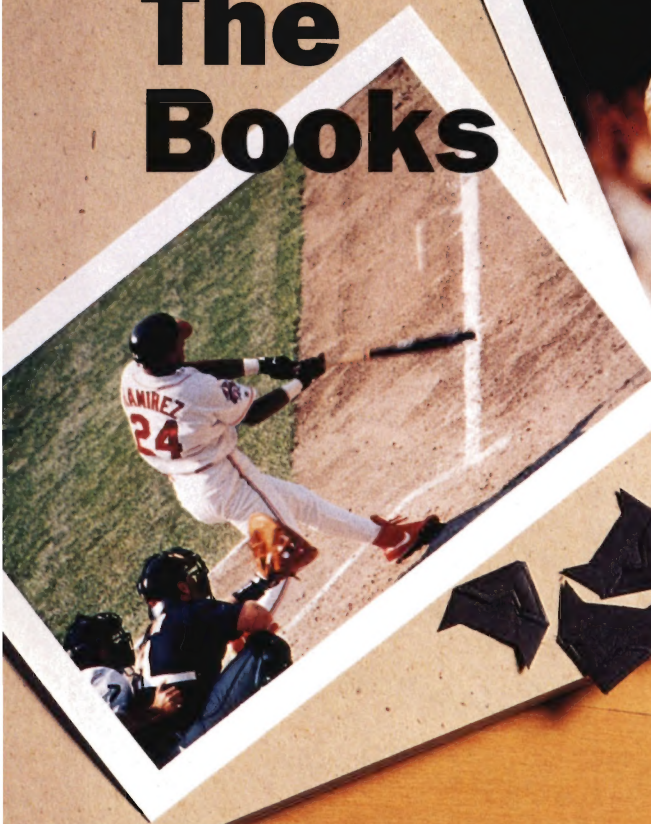




CLEVELAND INDIANS TEAM PITCHING

PITCHER	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SHO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Assenmacher, P	6	2	2.38	41	0	0	0	0	34.0	27	10	9	9	35
Clark, M	8	6	5.28	19	18	2	0	0	105.2	124	66	62	38	63
Embree, A	2	1	1.31	17	0	0	0	1	20.2	11	5	3	10	21
Hershiser, O	13	6	4.11	23	23	1	1	0	144.2	137	69	66	43	92
Hill, K	2	1	4.34	9	9	0	0	0	58.0	65	30	28	25	30
Lopez, A	0	0	3.13	6	2	0	0	0	23.0	17	8	8	7	22
Martinez, D	10	5	2.98	25	25	3	2	0	172.0	161	64	57	44	92
Mesa, J	3	0	1.22	56	0	0	0	42	59.0	47	9	8	15	55
Nagy, C	13	5	4.60	25	25	1	0	0	152.2	166	83	78	54	120
Ogea, C	8	3	3.24	17	13	1	0	0	97.1	88	37	35	28	52
Plunk, E	6	2	2.80	53	0	0	0	2	61.0	47	19	19	27	67
Poole, J	3	3	3.74	36	0	0	0	0	43.1	35	19	18	14	38
Tavarez, J	10	2	2.40	51	0	0	0	0	78.2	73	34	21	20	63
CLEVELAND	88	39	3.80	127	127	8	9	46	1150.0	1120	533	485	399	825
OPPONENTS	39	88	5.42	127	127	14	3	21	1127.2	1269	725	679	484	685

1995... One For The Books



...Coinciding with the opening of Jacobs Field, the Indians have risen into one of the elite franchises in baseball... They have addressed, with a creative approach, the economic times of the sport, developing a blueprint that many other teams have since adopted... And a funny thing happened: it worked. The proof is the team that you'll see on the field today.

By Jim Ingraham;

Photos by Gregory Drezdson, 1995 unless otherwise noted.
So? How does it feel?

How does it feel to be among the first group of fans to attend a post-season series involving the Indians since the Eisenhower administration?

Talk about your long strange trips.

This one was very long.

And very strange.

For the first time since 1954—that's nine presidents ago, or, if you like, since Mike Hargrove was five years old—the Indians are playing in the post-season.

Baseball in October in Cleveland.

If you're under 40 years of age, this has never happened in your lifetime.

All of which is not to say that nobody saw this coming. Diehard Indians fans will tell you they could see it coming last year, when the Tribe was in the thick of a pennant race, and in prime position to qualify for the post-season as a wild card team, when the players went on strike.

However, the official start of the Tribe's long climb to the Central Division crown began before there was even a Central Division. It was in 1991, when the team lost a club-record 105 games, that General Manager John Hart and his staff first started to formulate the plan they would implement over the next four years, resulting in the Indians this year becoming the first champions of the American League's Central Division.

In particular, the last two years, coinciding with the opening of Jacobs Field, the Indians have risen into one of the elite franchises in baseball. For the most part, the decisions made by Hart and his staff have been good ones, in some ways revolutionary. They have addressed, with a creative approach, the economic times of the sport, developing a blueprint that many other teams have since adopted. More importantly, once it was developed, the Indians, backed by owner Richard Jacobs, stuck with their plan. And a funny thing happened: it worked. The proof is the team that you'll see on the field today.



It's a team that has authored one of the great seasons in Indians history—even if it was a bit late in getting started.

True, the 1995 season did begin a little later than normal, but when you've been waiting 31 years for a championship season, what's another three weeks, right?

On the other hand, one of the things that made the baseball strike so frustrating for Indians fans was that they knew, or, at least, strongly suspected, that once the real season, with the real players, began, the Indians were going to be a force to be reckoned with.

There was evidence of that in 1994, when the Tribe, with a record of 66-47, was just one game behind first place Chicago when the strike began on August 12. The Indians would have qualified for the post-season as the wild card team, but, of course, there was no post-season.

Clearly, though, the pieces were finally starting to come together for the Indians. In 1994, they led the league in runs scored and home runs, and were tied with the Yankees for the league lead in hitting. The Tribe's pitching was solid: a 4.36 ERA ranked fifth in the league.

All that was necessary for '95 was to do a little tinkering with the roster. Add a starting pitcher here, a relief pitcher there, another bat off the bench.

Nothing dramatic. Just some functional additions. So, naturally, the Indians did both.

As the team began to assemble in Winter Haven, FL, for an abbreviated three-week training camp following the end of the players' strike the first week of April, Indians officials wasted no time in making some functional additions that were also extremely dramatic.

In a six-day feeding frenzy, the Indians signed four high profile veteran players—three of them pitchers—in the hopes of finishing off a club that already had its foundation and most of its infrastructure set.

On April 5, they signed future Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, who had the distinction of becoming the first player ever traded during a work stoppage. The Indians had acquired Winfield from the Twins in a trade during the players' strike. But when the season was cancelled, Winfield never wore a Cleveland uniform.

He became a free agent, but decided to sign with the Indians.

"There were only about a half-dozen teams I would have considered playing for this year, and Cleveland was one of them," Winfield said. "I wasn't going to come back to play baseball just for the sake of playing baseball. I needed a spark, and Cleveland has it. This is a team in contention, and I want to contribute."

The day the Indians signed Winfield, Tribe traveling secretary Mike Seghi phoned Patti Olin, the widow of former Tribe pitcher Steve Olin, who had worn uniform No. 31 with the Indians. That number is also the number Winfield has worn throughout his Hall of Fame career. The Indians never officially retired Olin's number following his death in a boating accident in the spring of 1993, but it was generally conceded that nobody would wear it again anytime soon.

Seghi phoned Patti Olin to see if she would mind if the Indians issued the number to Winfield.

"Patti was great about it," Seghi said. "She said that was fine. She said she was glad a future Hall of Famer would be wearing it, not some rookie."



The historical significance of the addition of Winfield to a roster that already included Eddie Murray, was not lost on the Tribe players. Winfield and Murray entered the season as the top two active players in home runs, RBI, and hits.

"Our games are going to take four hours this year," joked Kenny Lofton. "Every time Dave or Eddie get a hit, they're going to stop the game and get the ball."

When the Indians originally traded for Winfield from the Twins during the players' strike, what the Indians gave the Twins in return was contingent on how much Winfield contributed to the Indians the rest of the season.

Since there was no rest of the season, the terms of the trade said Indians officials owed Twins officials a dinner.

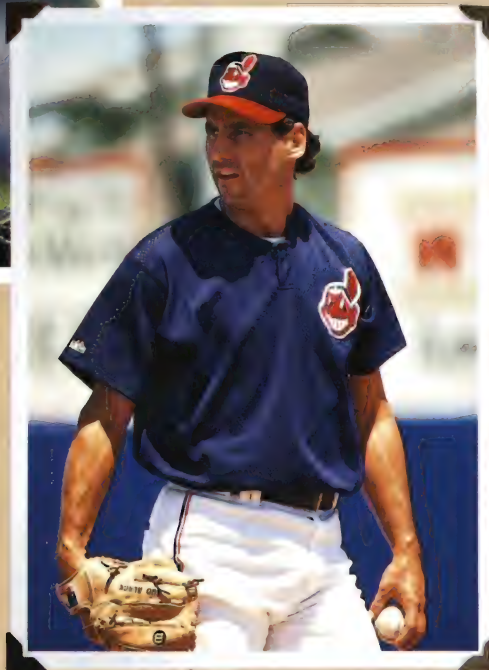
Hart said the debt was paid

off at an owners meeting that fall in Ft. Lauderdale.

"I'll say this," Hart said, with a laugh, "they (Twins officials) didn't eat like a small market team. The wine was flowing, and they were ordering entrees from the menu that didn't have prices."

On April 7, two days after they signed Winfield, the Indians signed lefthander Bud Black, who had pitched in Cleveland from 1988-90 before he was dealt to Toronto in one of the first trades the Indians made as part of the systematic makeover of the roster that, now, five years later, included the re-acquisition of Black.

The next day, the Indians added another pitcher. And not just any pitcher. On April 8, the Tribe signed free agent Orel Hershisier, whose 12-year career with the Dodgers included three All-Star appearances, three Division Championships, a World Series Championship, and the almost-inconceivable



Photos Gregory Drezdson

Hart pointed out that pennants CAN be won by teams using the "closer by committee" approach. He pointed to the Pirates in the early 1990s as proof (as most everyone does since it's just about the only example of such a setup working), saying a team can win a title without a No. 1 go-to guy in the back end of the bullpen.

Of course, a much better setup—certainly one that helps prevent a manager from turning prematurely gray—is to have one lights-out, no-questions-asked closer who can protect a ninth-inning lead without inducing apoplexy in the dugout.

Did the Indians have such a pitcher?

No.

Or did they?

Tribe officials thought they might. His name: Jose Mesa.

There was nothing in Mesa's past to suggest he could handle such a high-pressure assignment as being the closer on a team trying to win a pennant. But he did have the kind of arm you can't order out of a catalog. And, well, the Indians had nobody else.

So while Mesa was being groomed for the role in training camp, Indians scouts fanned out all over Florida, intently watching and writing reports on all of the closers who might be available in a trade.

The list included Bryan Harvey, Rick Aguilera, and Jeff Montgomery.

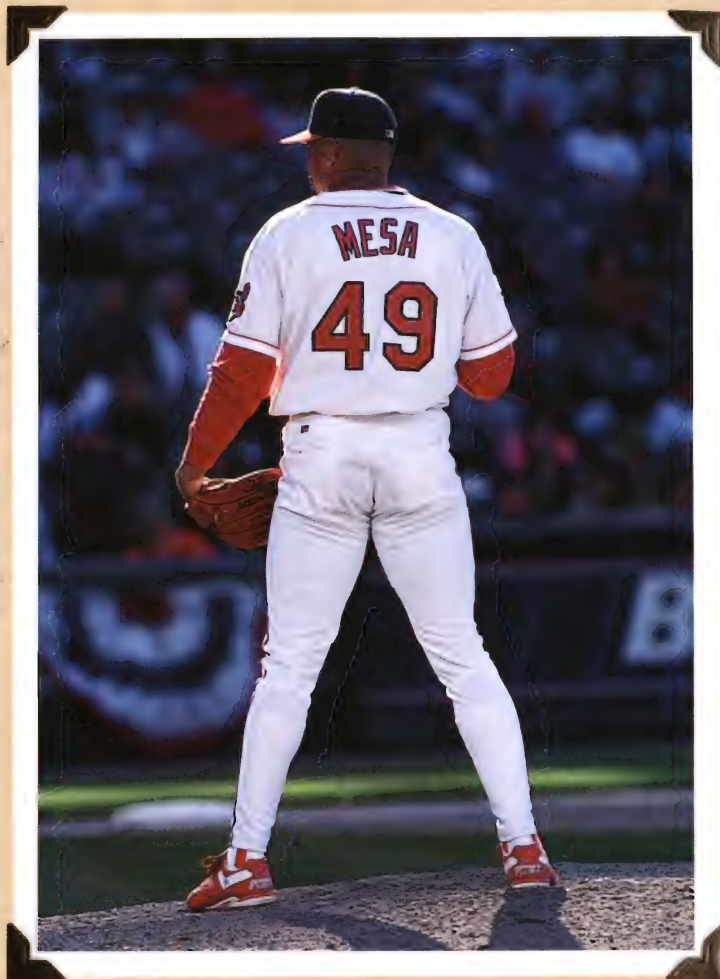
It didn't take long for Winter Haven to become the headquarters for rumor control as there was almost daily speculation over which package of prospects the Indians would ship to the Marlins for Harvey, or to the

...One lights out, no questions-asked closer who can protect a ninth-inning lead without inducing apoplexy in the dugout.

Did the Indians Have such a pitcher?

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Gregory Drezzdon

Twins for Aguilera, or to the Royals for Montgomery.

Sitting in the eye of the hurricane of rumors was Hart. The Tribe general manager tried to downplay the significance of the scouting of other teams' closers, while at the same time pouring some cold water on the feverish trade speculation.

"This is just part of our normal scouting process," he said.

"We are not actively talking with any team about a closer—that's my story, and I'm sticking to it."

Unfortunately for Hart, nobody bought it.

Speculation over a trade for a closer continued throughout training camp, partly because there was nothing else for the media to do. In the Indians star-studded lineup, there were no jobs to be won or lost among the position players, so that annual rite of spring was missing. The pitching staff wasn't completely set, but just about. There were only one or two spots open in the bullpen.

One of those, of course, seemed to be the closer's role.

And that only poured more fuel into the rumor mill.

So while Hart held daily "easy, fellas" press briefings, trying to calm down a news-starved media, only too eager to stoke the "trade for a closer" bonfire, Mesa went about his business, seemingly oblivious to it all.

The 28-year-old righthander, who to that point had only two saves in his big league career, had an uneventful three weeks in Florida. Hargrove would bring him into exhibition games at the end of games, getting him accustomed to the role of being the man on

Dennis Martinez's 9-0 start was the best start by a Tribe hurler since RHP Barry Latman started the 1961 campaign at 9-0. Latman finished the season with a 13-5 record and was a member of the 1961 AL All-Star squad. The last Indians hurler with a better start was RHP Johnny Allen, who started the 1937 season 15-0 before ending up with a 15-1 mark.

...Martinez was Martinez. He would turn 40 shortly after the season started, but you'd never know it. Carving up the strike zone with surgical precision, he was the unquestioned No. 1 starter on the staff.



the mound when the chips are on the table.

"Jose has the arm for it," Hargrove said. "The one thing you look for in a closer is somebody with one dominating pitch, or a great arm. Jose has both. When he throws strikes, his fastball can be dominating. And we know he has one of the best arms in the league."

Outside of settling the question of who would be the bullpen closer, the other questions to be answered in training camp were minor by comparison.

The battle for the backup catcher's spot was again between Tony Pena and Jesse Levis. This decision took on added importance as the Indians neared the end of training camp because Alomar's left knee began to ache again.

Alomar injured the knee sliding into second base while playing in Puerto Rico over the winter. In early November, Alomar underwent surgery to repair cartilage in his knee.

But halfway through training camp the knee began to hurt again, and it became apparent that Alomar was not going to be ready to start the season. For that reason, the Indians kept both Pena and Levis on the roster to start the season.

Because of the shortened training camp, Major League teams were allowed to begin the season with 28-man rosters. That's three over the normal roster size. When the Indians finalized their roster, the three extra players were pitcher Chad Ogea, infielder David Bell, and outfielder Ruben Amaro.

Alomar started the season on the disabled list.

He underwent a second operation on his left knee April 27, again to repair torn cartilage. He was expected to miss two months.



Gregory Drezdson

"It's a disappointment, but Tony-Pena is a very good catcher, as he proved last year," Hargrove said.

The other matter to settle in training camp was to determine in which order the starting rotation would be arranged on Opening Day.

There was no question that Martinez would be the Opening Day starter, but how the four starters would line up behind him was not revealed until the final weekend of training camp.

Martinez would be followed by Mark Clark, Hershisir, Charles Nagy, and Black.

Because of off days, the Indians would go with four starters for the first two weeks of the season. That meant Black would remain in Florida, where he would take a regular turn pitching with the Indians extended spring team, before joining the Indians when a fifth starter was needed.

As for the front four, Martinez was Martinez. He would turn 40 shortly after the season started, but you'd never know it. Carving up the strike zone with surgical precision, he was the unquestioned No. 1 starter on the staff.

Clark was coming off a 1994 season that in some

Continued on page 70.

CLEVELAND INDIANS



Gregory Drezdron, 1995

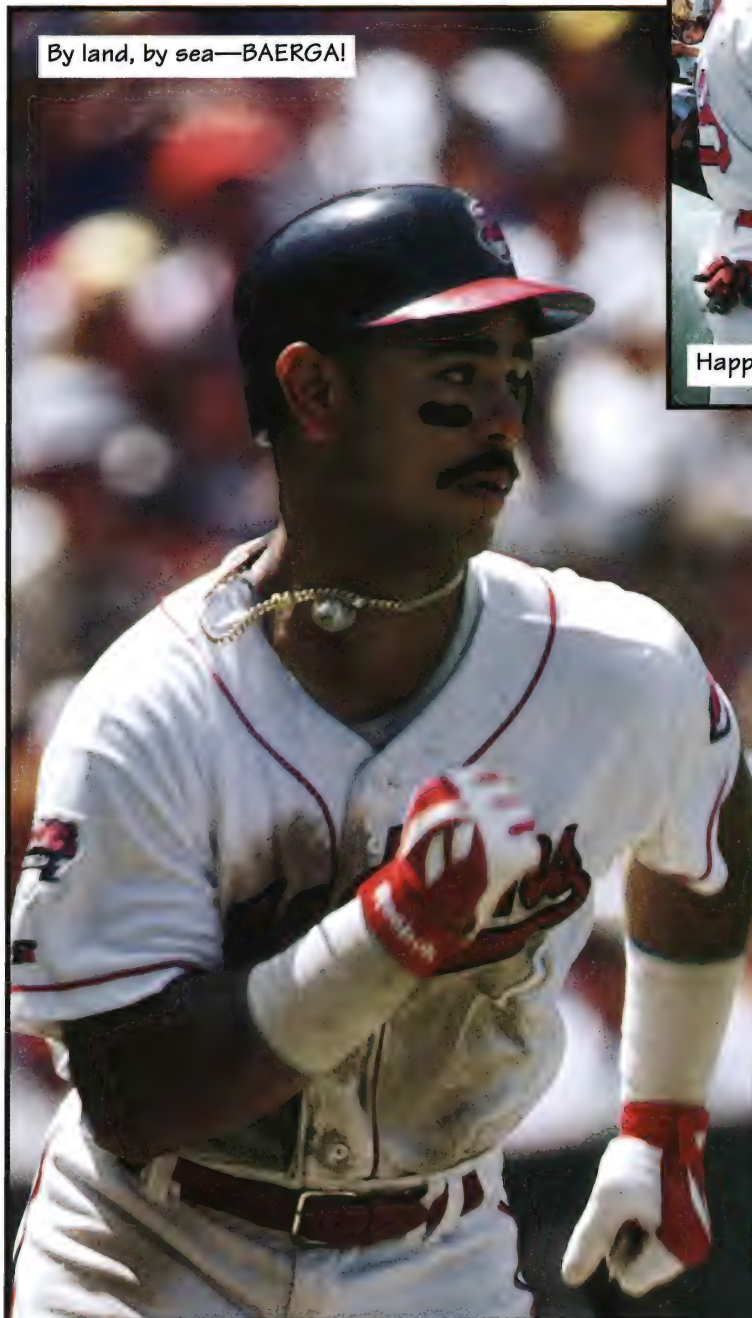
NO.	PITCHERS	B-T	HT.	WT.	BORN	BIRTHPLACE	RESIDENCE
45	ASSENMACHER, Paul	L-L	6-3	210	12-10-60	Allen Park, MI	Stone Mountain, GA
54	CLARK, Mark	R-R	6-5	225	5-12-68	Bath, IL	Bath, IL
56	EMBREE, Alan	L-L	6-2	190	1-23-70	Vancouver, WA	Columbus, GA
55	HERSHISER, Orel	R-R	6-3	195	9-16-58	Buffalo, NY	Pasadena, CA
44	HILL, Ken	R-R	6-2	205	12-14-65	Lynn, MA	Beverly, MA
59	LOPEZ, Albie	R-R	6-2	205	8-18-71	Mesa, AZ	Mesa, AZ
32	MARTINEZ, Dennis	R-R	6-1	180	5-14-55	Granada, Nicaragua	Miami, FL
49	MESA, Jose	R-R	6-3	225	5-22-66	Azua, DR	Westlake, OH
41	NAGY, Charles	L-R	6-3	200	5-5-67	Fairfield, CT	Westlake, OH
37	OGEA, Chad	R-R	6-2	200	11-9-70	Lake Charles, LA	Lake Charles, LA
38	PLUNK, Eric	R-R	6-6	220	9-3-63	Wilmington, CA	Riverside, CA
62	POOLE, Jim	L-L	6-2	203	4-28-66	Rochester, NY	Ellicott City, MD
50	TAVAREZ, Julian	R-R	6-2	165	5-22-73	Santiago, DR	Santiago, DR
NO.	CATCHERS	B-T	HT.	WT.	BORN	BIRTHPLACE	RESIDENCE
15	ALOMAR, Sandy	R-R	6-5	215	6-18-66	Salinas, PR	Westlake, OH
17	PENA, Tony	R-R	6-0	185	6-4-57	Monte Cristi, DR	Santiago, DR
NO.	INFELDERS	B-T	HT.	WT.	BORN	BIRTHPLACE	RESIDENCE
9	BAERGA, Carlos	S-R	5-11	200	11-4-68	San Juan, PR	Westlake, OH
10	ESPINOZA, Alvaro	R-R	6-0	190	12-19-62	Valencia, Venezuela	Bergenfield, NJ
33	MURRAY, Eddie	S-R	6-2	220	2-24-56	Los Angeles, CA	Canyon County, CA
36	PERRY, Herbert	R-R	6-2	215	9-15-69	Live Oak, FL	Mayo, FL
11	SORRENTO, Paul	L-R	6-2	220	11-17-65	Somerville, MA	Largo, FL
25	THOME, Jim	L-R	6-4	220	8-27-70	Peoria, IL	Peoria, IL
13	VIZQUEL, Omar	S-R	5-9	165	4-24-67	Caracas, Venezuela	Caracas, Venezuela
NO.	OUTFIELDERS	B-T	HT.	WT.	BORN	BIRTHPLACE	RESIDENCE
30	AMARO, Ruben	S-R	5-10	175	2-12-65	Philadelphia, PA	Philadelphia, PA
8	BELLE, Albert	R-R	6-2	210	8-25-66	Shreveport, LA	Euclid, OH
35	KIRBY, Wayne	L-R	5-10	185	1-22-64	Williamsburg, VA	Yorktown, VA
7	LOFTON, Kenny	L-L	6-0	180	5-31-67	East Chicago, IN	Tucson, AZ
24	RAMIREZ, Manny	R-R	6-0	190	5-30-72	Santo Domingo, DR	North Olmsted, OH
31	WINFIELD, Dave	R-R	6-6	245	10-13-51	St. Paul, MN	Fort Myers, FL

MANAGER: Mike Hargrove (21)

COACHES: Buddy Bell (26), Luis Isaac (6), Charlie Manuel (42), Dave Nelson (1), Jeff Newman (29), Mark Wiley (28), Dan Williams (44)

Seventh Inning STRETCHERS

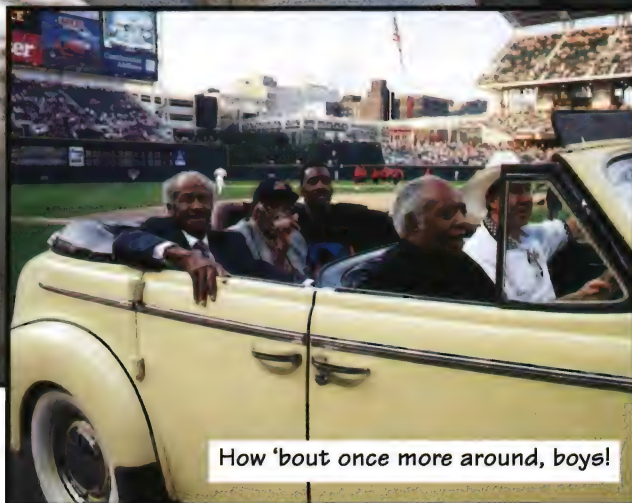
By land, by sea—BAERGA!



Happy Birthday, Jim!



My young man, you have such nice handwriting!



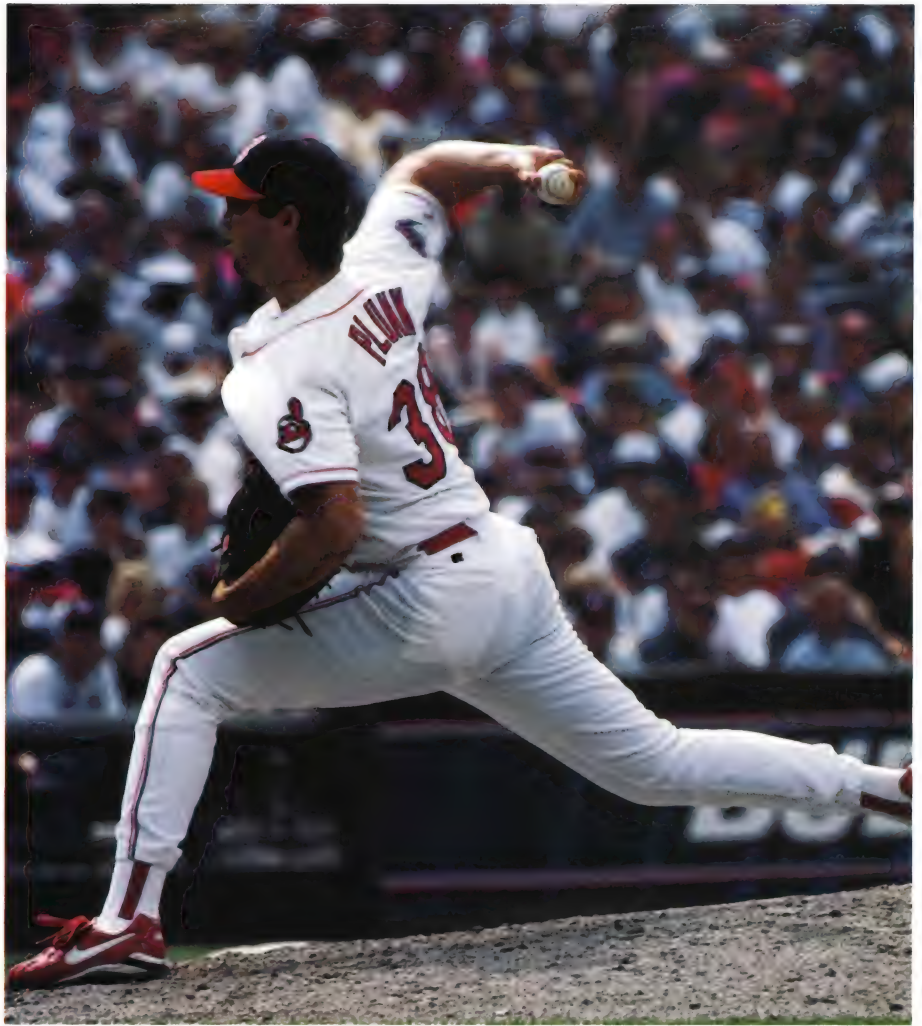
How 'bout once more around, boys!



Yet another sweep at Jacobs Field!

Cover Quiz...

The photo on the cover of this program is typical of many endings at Jacobs Field this season. Several of our boys have found themselves affectionately "bashed" by their teammates during 1995. Can you guess who the hero is underneath this particular pile, what the date was and why the celebration? The answer can be found on the Indians Internet beginning on Monday, October 9, 1995. Look us up on the web site at www.indians.com. Good luck! For more information on the Indians web site, please see page 6 of this game program.

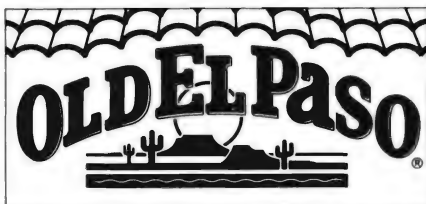


Gregory Drezdon



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ways was the best and worst of his career. He shot out to a record of 11-3, but in late July, suffered a broken wrist that ended his season. Would he be able to regain his '94 form in '95?

Hershiser was looked at as a major upgrade over fading Jack Morris, who won 10 games for the Tribe in '94, due more to the Indians prolific offense than to the repertoire of the still game, but out-of-gas Morris.

Nagy had yet to return to the level he reached in 1992 when he was a 17-game winner, but he was one of four Tribe pitchers to reach double figures in victories in 1994, and he was being counted on to do at least as well in '95.

The bullpen included the three lefthanders: Assenmacher, Cook, and Poole, plus righthanders Eric Plunk, the club's best reliever over the last three years, and rookie Julian Tavarez, whom Tribe officials hoped to gradually ease into a regular role as starter.

To the surprise of many, the Indians never did consummate a trade for a closer. Hart and Hargrove announced they were prepared to go with Mesa in that role. It would be perhaps the most critical decision they made regarding the roster all year.

"I like our staff," Hart said at the start of the season. "One of our off-season goals was to add a starter, and upgrade the bullpen with some lefthanders. We think we've done both of those things. We didn't get a closer, but we think Jose is going to be OK."

Aside from Pena replacing the injured Alomar, there never was any question about who would start where among the position players.

The Indians lineup was a potent mixture of speed and power. And with the exception of Pena, the other seven position players on the field were all under 30 years of age.

The infield of Paul Sorrento, Carlos Baerga, Omar Vizquel, and Jim Thome and the outfield of Belle, Lofton, and Ramirez was established to the point where it would allow Hargrove the luxury of carrying 12 pitchers for most of the season, two more than the norm.

In addition to the Indians stalking a post-season berth in 1995, their designated hitter would be chasing history. Murray began the season with 2,930 hits, 70 shy of becoming the 20th man in baseball history to reach 3,000.

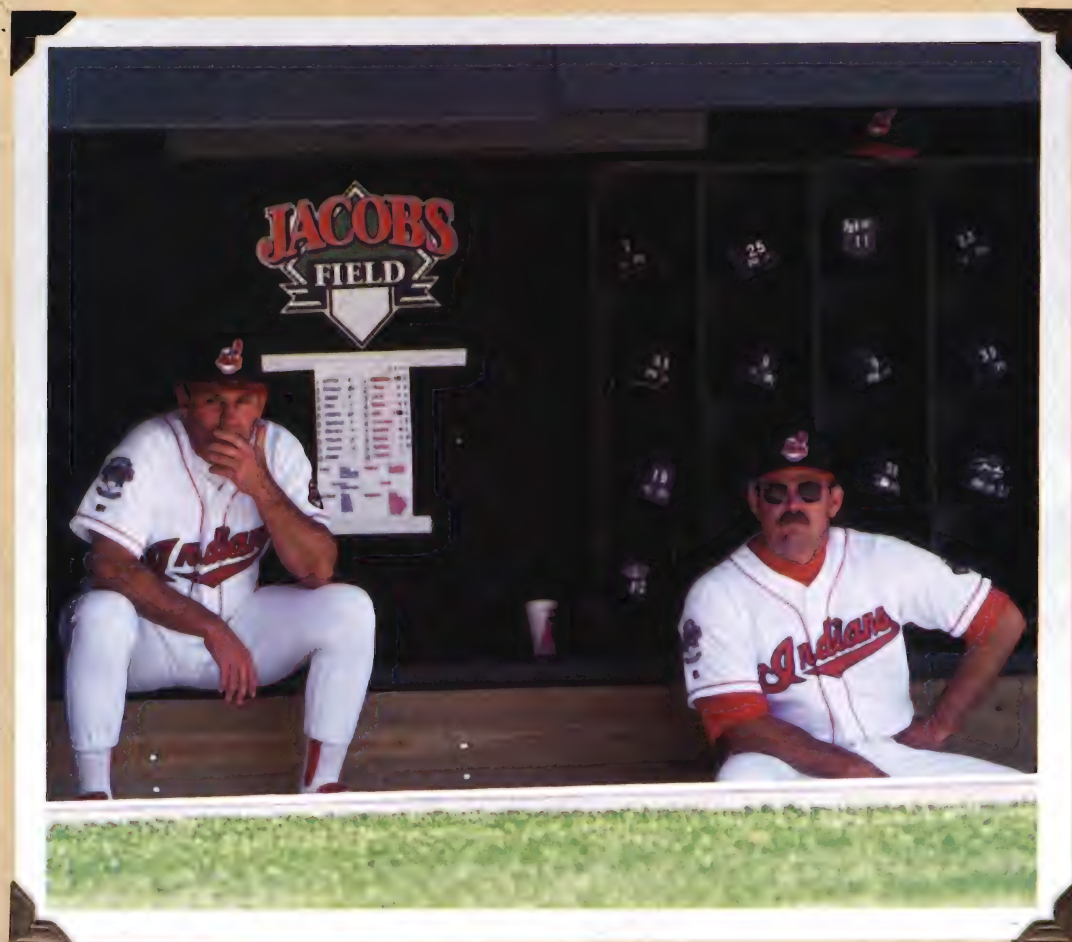
"The two things that will always stand out in my mind when I think of Eddie's career," Hart said, "is, one, that he played all the time. He takes great pride in playing, even when he's hurt. The other thing is that he's been such a consistent run producer every year. He just puts up the numbers ALL THE TIME."

Indeed, Murray's year-by-year career numbers look like they got stuck in a copy machine. Entering the '95 season, he had never had FEWER than 84 RBI in a full season.

He's hit home runs batting right-handed and left-handed in the same game, a Major League record 11 times, including on consecutive days in Chicago

GROVER'S LINEUP FOR 1995 IS SET!

Kenny Lofton
Omar Vizquel
Carlos Baerga
Albert Belle
Eddie Murray
Jim Thome
Manny Ramirez
Paul Sorrento
Tony Pena/
Sandy Alomar



in 1987—a feat which Murray ranks as his greatest thrill in the game, outshining even his 3,000th hit.

“The thing about Eddie is that he’ll set up a pitcher to get him to throw the pitch he wants,” Hart said. “He’ll sit on a pitch. That’s why you see him take a bad hack every now and then. He’s sitting on a pitch, and he didn’t get it.”

One day in Winter Haven, while stretching his 39-year-old legs on the floor of the Indians clubhouse, Murray reflected on his 17 years in the big leagues, and how he would approach year No. 18, a season in which, barring injury, he would join baseball’s immortals by joining the exclusive 3,000-hit club.

“I never dreamed I’d play as long as I have,” he said. “All I tried to do was have a good career. I never thought I’d do some of the things I’ve done.”

During his long journey to the brink of 3,000 hits, Murray played in two World Series with the Orioles, and he took part in numerous pennant races. He knows what contending teams look like and smell like. And that April day in Winter Haven, he said he liked the looks of the Indians.

“This is a totally different club than the kind we had in Baltimore,” he said. “People feared playing us in Baltimore because of our pitching and defense. We took a lot of pride in throwing leather at people. We loved playing one-run games, because we had faith that everyone would catch the ball.

“Here (with the Indians), we just pound the ball out. We’ve got guys capable of playing good defense, but we’re more of an offensive club.”

Everyone connected with the Indians realized that the spotlight would brighten on Murray and the ballclub as Murray approached 3,000 hits. Hargrove, however, said he didn’t think Murray’s pursuit of his historic hit would be a distraction.

The Indians manager also had a full appreciation of



Gregory Drezdson

exactly what it would mean when Murray finally did collect hit No. 3,000.

“What it will mean,” Hargrove said, “is that he’ll have about 1,400 more hits than me.”

The Indians opened the season vs. the Rangers on April 27 in Arlington, TX. And they opened it with an exclamation point.

In a game that would be reflective of so many that the team would play in 1995, the Indians blasted five home runs in an 11-6 drubbing of the Rangers.

Baerga, Belle, Murray, Ramirez, and Sorrento all homered, and Martinez pitched six solid innings to get the win.

The Indians lost the next two games of the series—but it would be another six weeks before they would again lose consecutive games.

On April 30 in Texas, the fourth and final game of the series with the Rangers, the Indians won a very telling game.

It was a game in which they scored in their last at-bat to win. It was a victory in extra innings. And it was a game in which the bullpen, specifically Mesa, played a big part. Those would be characteristics found repeatedly in dozens of Tribe victories all season.

This one was a 7-6 win over the Rangers in 12 innings.

Belle and Murray led off the 12th with singles off loser Matt Whiteside. Belle went to third on Murray's hit and then scored from third on a groundout by Jim Thome, which broke a 5-5 tie. Espinoza's pinch RBI single added an insurance run that was needed, when Mesa gave up a leadoff home run to Dean Palmer in the bottom of the 12th.

However, Mesa, who had entered the game an inning earlier, got the next three outs to pick up the victory.

The bullpen, which as a unit would be the unsung hero of the team throughout the season, made its first impact in this game. After Texas scored four runs in the first inning, Nagy, Tavarez, Plunk, Assenmacher, and Mesa combined to hold the Rangers to one run on six hits over the next 10 innings.

The Indians finished April 2-2, and in second place, 1 1/2 games behind Kansas City.

The Indians then moved on to Detroit, where opening day at Tiger Stadium turned into the ugliest spectacle of the season. In the midst of the Indians 11-1 rout of the Tigers, the game was interrupted several times by fans who either threw debris onto the field, or ran onto the field themselves.

"That was a disgrace," Hart said.

The next day, Tigers president John McHale personally apologized to Lofton, who was the target of much of the garbage thrown out of the center field bleachers.

Undaunted by such distractions, the Indians, who

blasted seven home runs in the first two games of the series, also won the next day 14-7, before losing the final game, 4-3.

That brought the Tribe home to Jacobs Field for the home opener with a record of 4-3.

On the night of May 5, the Indians played their first game at Jacobs Field in nine months. Their last home game in the strike-shortened 1994 season was August 4.

And by the reception the Indians got for their home opener, you would have never known there had been a work stoppage. A crowd of 41,434, the 29th consecutive sellout at Jacobs Field, was on hand to see the Indians defeat the Minnesota Twins, 5-1.

It was a momentous night for several reasons, not the least of which being it showed that the Indians fans had not, during the nine-month strike, lost their thirst for what the Indians had achieved in 1994—and might achieve in 1995.

"This is a tribute to our fans," Hart said. "I think they appreciate what we're doing here, and it shows how great the thirst is to have a winner here."

Indians officials also had some other theories for why their fans, unlike those in many cities, came back strong after the strike.

"I think the fans here were truly excited by the prospects of this team, and so they were willing to look past the business side of baseball and concentrate on the game," Hargrove said.

"I think the fans here were truly excited by the prospects of this team, and so they were willing to look past the business side of baseball and concentrate on the game."

—Mike Hargrove



Gregory Drezdton

"The fans were innocent bystanders in this, and we feel bad about what happened because they had something taken away from them," said Nagy, the Indians player representative. "I wouldn't blame them for being upset in Cleveland, with us in a position to play in the post-season. But the fact that they've come back like this tells you what kind of fans we have: We'd like to win it all for them."

Jeff Overton, the Indians Vice President of Marketing and Communications, said the organization made a concerted effort not to go into hibernation during the strike.

"We kept all of our business staff on board," Overton said. "We cut commercials, and we did something most teams didn't do: We tried to keep our players in our fans' minds by putting their pictures on our season ticket brochures and pocket schedules."

All the planning in the world, of course, couldn't have brought the fans back without a good product. And the 1995 Indians, clearly, were the best team most Tribe fans had ever been able to buy a ticket to see.

Which is the bottom line on why the sell-outs at Jacobs Field, which were routine before the strike, became routine after it as well.

And it was games like Opening Night vs. the Twins that underscored the type of team the Indians had assembled.

The 5-1 victory that night featured all the elements except one (no Tribe home runs) that the Indians would use so frequently in 1995: good starting pitching, timely hitting, and Jose Mesa.

Ironically, Opening Night at Jacobs Field was also Mesa's coming-out party as the Indians new closer. After weeks of rumors that the club was pursuing this closer or scouting that one, the Indians finally chose to do nothing.

The decision was made to start the season with Mesa as the closer, come what may.

And on Opening Night at Jacobs Field, Mesa picked up his first save in what would be a historic season for him. With the Indians leading 5-1, nobody out, and runners at first and second, Mesa was called in from the bullpen to relieve Tavaréz.

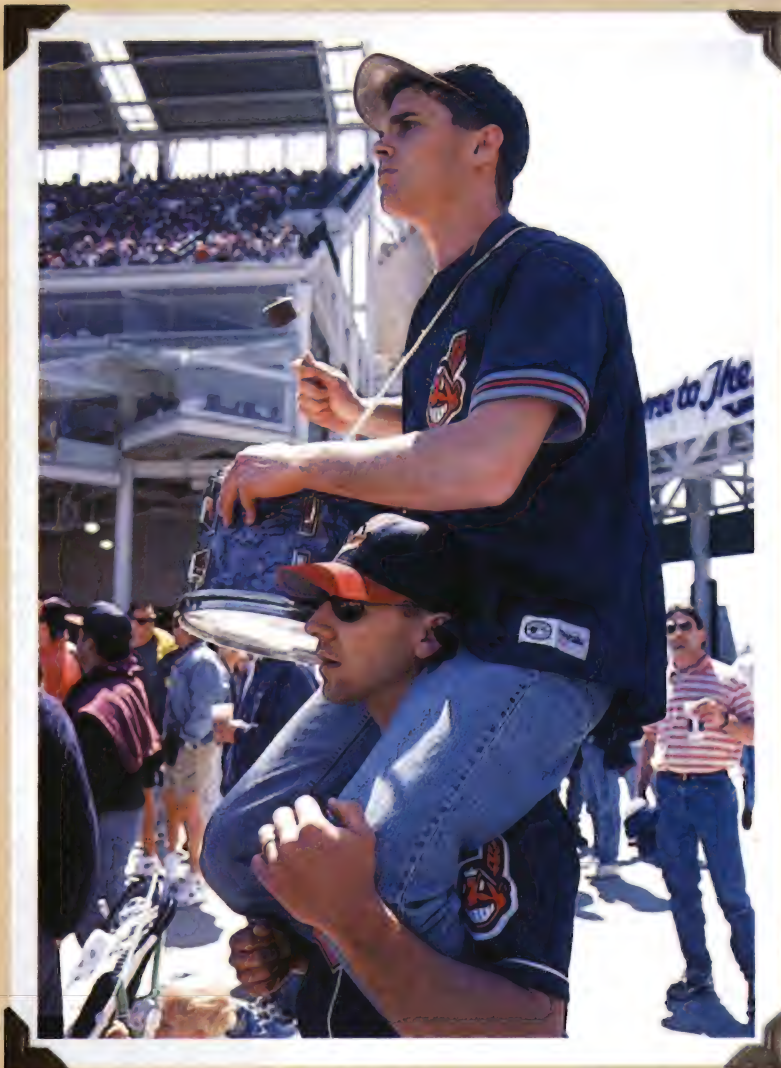
The first batter Mesa faced was the most dangerous hitter in the Minnesota lineup: Kirby Puckett.

Mesa struck him out.

The second batter was Matt Merullo.

There was no third batter.

Mesa got Merullo to ground into a game-ending double play. Opening Night in Cleveland was a 5-1 Tribe victory, and Mesa had his first save in his All-Star season.



Gregory Drezdson

The 1995 Indians were undoubtedly the best team most Tribe fans had ever been able to buy a ticket to see...

HOT TICKET

The Indians sold out 57 of their 71 home dates in 1995, including the last 52 in a row... Over 2.8 million fans visited Jacobs Field in '95, setting a new franchise record for attendance in a single season... The Indians also reached the one million attendance mark in a club record 27 dates.

MAY MILESTONES

- The Tribe's longest game (by time) occurred on May 7 vs. the Minnesota Twins (6:36)... The Indians longest game by inning was also against the Twins on August 31, 1993 at the Metrodome... The Twins came out on top after 22 innings.
- May 9 marked the second time in history that the Tribe scored eight runs before recording an out. The last time was July 6, 1954 vs. Baltimore. The only other team to accomplish the feat was the New York Yankees on April 24, 1960 vs. Baltimore.

The next day, No. 5 starter Black made his first start of the season, after two weeks of trying to stay sharp in Florida and by throwing in the bullpen, and the results were predictable: a 5-2 loss to the Twins.

In the third game of the series on Sunday, May 7, the Indians and Twins played one of the most memorable games of the season. And one of the longest. In fact, THE longest. Not just of the season, but of all-time for the Indians.

In a marathon 17-inning endurance test, won by the Indians 10-9, the Tribe and Twins played for six hours and 36 minutes, the longest game in Indians history in elapsed time.

The Indians pounded out 26 hits, the last of which was an RBI single by Lofton (in his 10th at-bat of the game) with one out in the bottom of the 17th inning, which ended the game. The two teams combined to use 17 pitchers, who combined to throw 589 pitches (14 walks, 20 strikeouts).

"I looked up at the scoreboard one time and I was 0 for 3," Thome said, "The next thing I know, I'm 1 for 7."

Tribe catcher Jesse Levis said at one point he asked Twins outfielder Marty Cordova, what at-bat this was for him in the game. Cordova answered that it was his eighth at-bat.

"That's more than I've gotten all year," Levis said.

Once again, the Indians bullpen was brilliant in the

17-inning marathon. Plunk, Mesa, and Poole combined to hold the Twins scoreless on four hits over the last nine innings. Poole pitched the last four innings, holding the Twins scoreless on one hit, to get the win.

Mesa was brought into the game in the 10th inning, although it was not a save situation, and he pitched 3 1/3 scoreless innings—his longest stint of the season.

The Indians offense was led by Lofton, Belle, and Murray, who had four hits each. Murray, who blasted two home runs, also had five RBI.

Of the 26 hits by the Indians, 21 of them were singles. The others: two doubles, three home runs. The Indians left 23 men on base, the Twins, 16.

Amazingly, the 26 hits were not an Indians record.

The club record for most hits in an extra-inning game is 33, in an 18-inning game against Philadelphia on July 10, 1932.

That electrifying win over the Twins helped slingshot the Indians into a five-game winning streak, which included a three-game sweep of Kansas City at Jacobs Field, during which the Indians outscored the Royals 19-4.

In the middle game of that series (May 9), Hershiser pitched eight shutout innings on four hits for his first American League victory: a 10-0 Tribe win.

Speaking of dominating, the Indians offense completely overwhelmed Royals starter Doug Linton.

Incredibly, the Indians scored eight runs in the first inning before Linton got the first out. Lofton led off the Tribe first with a home run. Two batters later, Baerga blasted a two-run homer. Then after two singles and two walks, Sorrento clubbed a grand slam home run. That gave the Indians an 8-0 lead, and there were still no outs in the first inning.

"I wish they would've started the National Anthem a half hour later," Linton said. "It happened so quick. You can pretty much say I was shell shocked. I wanted to come in and say, 'Uncle!'"

The eight runs is a Major League record for most runs scored in the first inning



Gregory Drezzdon



before the first out is made.

The Indians completed a three-game sweep of the Royals the next day, when Nagy, Poole, and Plunk combined on a four-hitter as the Indians scored a run in the bottom of the 10th on an RBI single by Ramirez, to win 3-2.

By that point, the Indians gorilla offense was in full fury, so much so that Hargrove was having a hard time finding enough playing time for all the hitters.

On May 10, the day of the 3-2 win over the Royals, Sorrento was leading the American League in RBI—and he couldn't even get into the starting lineup that day.

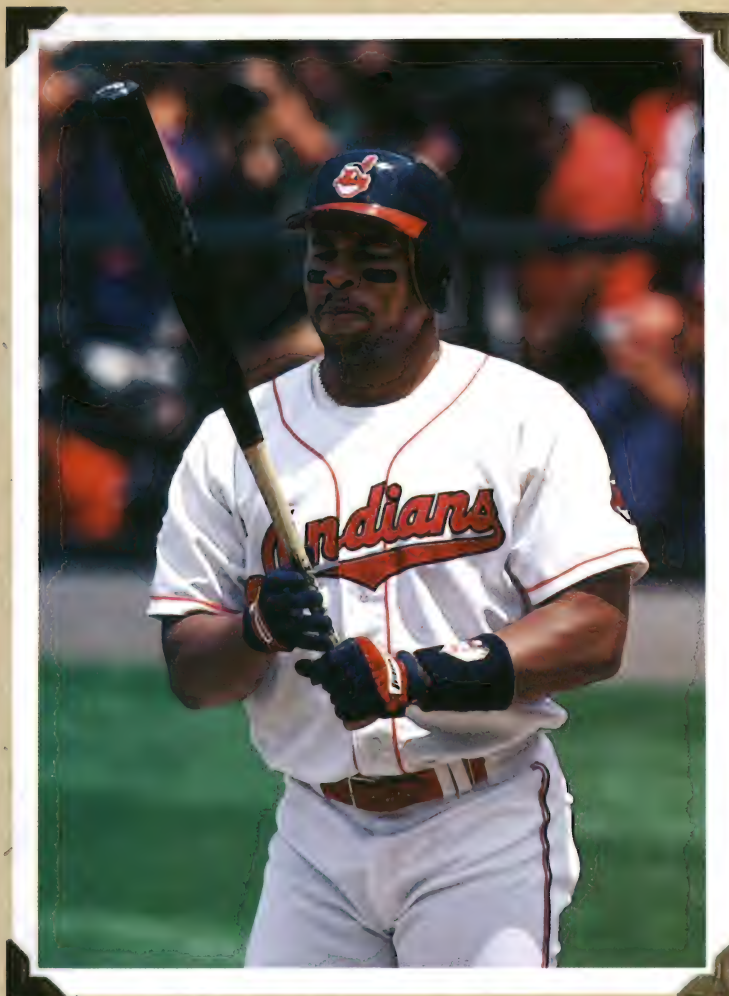
On May 12, the Indians began a nine-game trip through the AL East. They would visit Baltimore, New York, and Boston, and the trip was expected to give the Indians a good idea of where they stood, relative to three traditional AL powers.

The result was a 6-2 trip (there was one rainout in New York), climaxed by three astonishing late-inning comebacks by the Tribe in Boston.

The trip began on May 12 in Baltimore, a 3-2 Tribe victory in which Mesa picked up his second save of the season.

The next day, Mike Mussina became one of the few pitchers to dominate the Indians lineup from start to finish as he tossed a three-hitter in a 6-1 Orioles victory. In perhaps the best pitching performance the Indians saw all season, Mussina faced only 28 batters, one over the minimum. The Tribe's only run was a home run by Thome in the fifth inning.

In the third game of the series, Hershiser and four relievers combined on a four-hitter—the third time in the last five games Tribe pitchers held opponents to four hits—in a 3-1 victory. Mesa needed just seven pitches



Gregory Drezdzon

to get the last two outs in the ninth to earn his third save.

The Indians then moved on to New York, where they had lost all seven games played in 1994. In fact, they had lost their last nine games at Yankee Stadium, dating back to September 3, 1993. The Indians were also 0-2 vs. the Yankees in Cleveland in '94, meaning they were 0-9 overall vs. New York last year.

Those streaks came to a resound-

ing halt on the night of May 16 as the Tribe belted three home runs (Belle, Ramirez, Sorrento) and collected 15 hits overall to crush New York 10-5.

Belle's home run was only his third of the season, his first since April 28, a span of 63 at-bats. He scored four of the Indians 10 runs.

The losing pitcher was Jimmy Key, who came into the game with a career record vs. the Indians of 16-5. But the Indians unlocked Key for seven runs on 11 hits. A few weeks later, Key would undergo season-ending and career-threatening shoulder surgery.

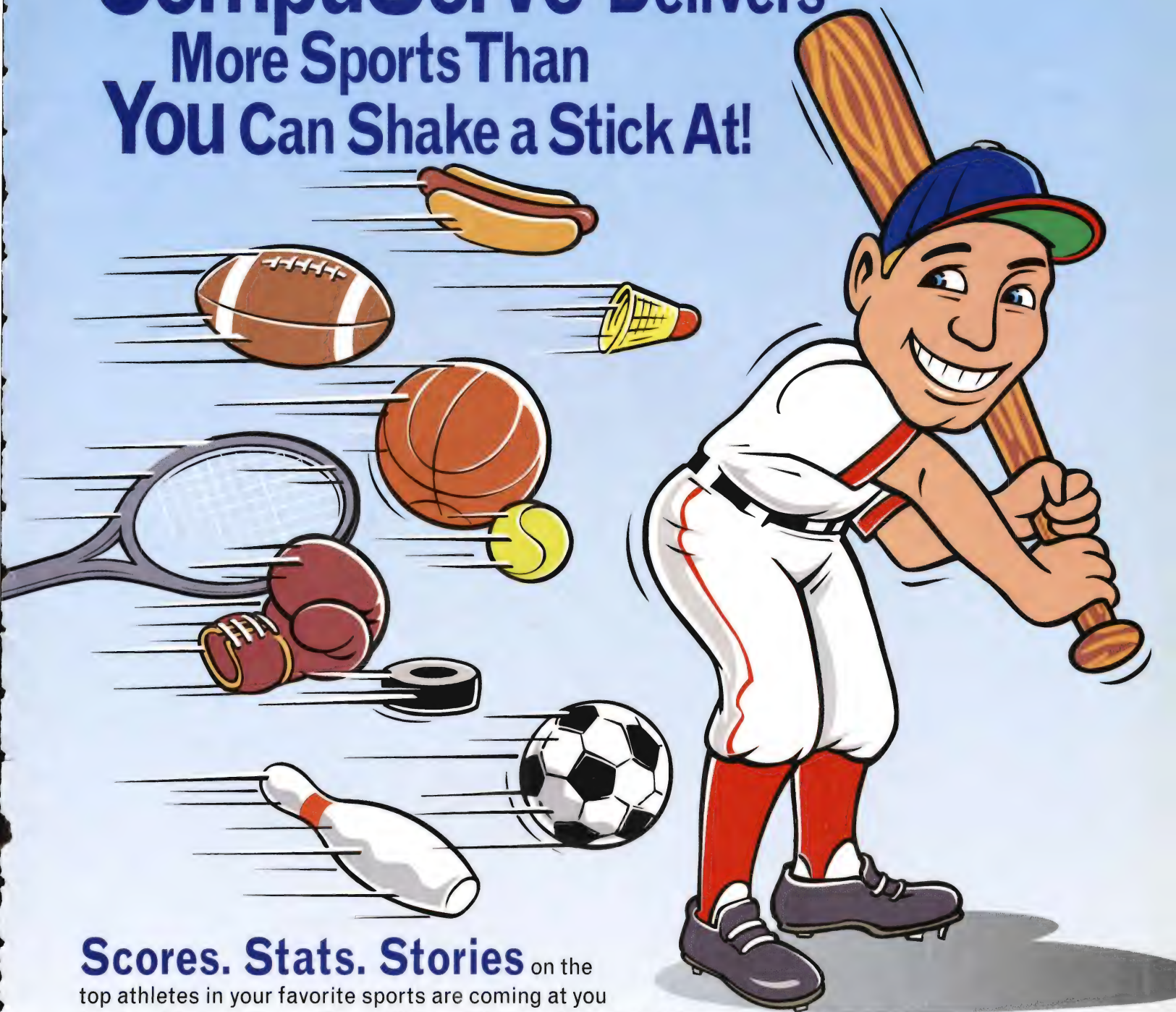
The game the next day was rained out, so the Indians moved on to Boston for a four-game series, the last three of which would provide the Indians with three of their most memorable games of the season.

The first game was a relatively tame 4-3 Boston victory. Then it got crazy.

The second game was Friday night, May 19. It started out like it would be one of the most forgettable nights of the year for the Indians. Clark was knocked out in the fourth inning, by which time the Red Sox had a 5-1 lead. But the Indians scored a run in the sixth and a run in the eighth, to cut the Boston lead to 5-3.

The Red Sox were three outs away from taking the first two games of the series. But then, in the top of the ninth, the Indians held a Boston tea party.

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It began with a home run by Ramirez off reliever Ken Ryan. The lead was down to 5-4.

Wayne Kirby walked, but when Ryan struck out the next two batters, Kirby stole second.

The Indians were one out from defeat, but also one hit away from tying the game.

Ryan intentionally walked Lofton, Boston manager Kevin Kennedy going against the book by putting the go-ahead run on base.

Then came three daggers to the heart by the Tribe.

Vizquel singled home Kirby to tie the score. Baerga singled home Lofton to give the Indians a 6-5 lead. And Belle put the exclamation point on the inning for the Tribe by blasting an 0-2 pitch from Ryan over the right field fence for a three-run home run.

Fenway Park became as quiet as a tomb.

The Red Sox were stunned.

The Indians had scored six runs in the ninth inning—five after two outs—to turn a 5-3 Boston lead into a 9-5 Tribe victory.

"I don't think it's a whole lot of fun to pitch out of the stretch against our club," Hershiser said. "With every pitch, the mistakes can mount."

But that was just the beginning of the weekend of misery the Indians inflicted on the Red Sox.

Act II of the Bruising of Boston came on Saturday.

This time, the Indians were trailing 5-3, entering the eighth inning. Same score, different inning, same result.

It was almost spooky.

The Indians eighth inning that day unfolded almost exactly as their ninth inning had the night before.

As was the case on Friday, the Tribe's rally in the eighth inning began with a home run—this one by Belle off reliever Alejandro Pena, a pitcher who, ironically, worked out for the Indians during spring training, but club officials decided not to sign him—a decision that paid off that day.

Pena retired the next batter, but then Ramirez,

who had clubbed a two-run homer in the fourth inning, restarted the rally with a single.

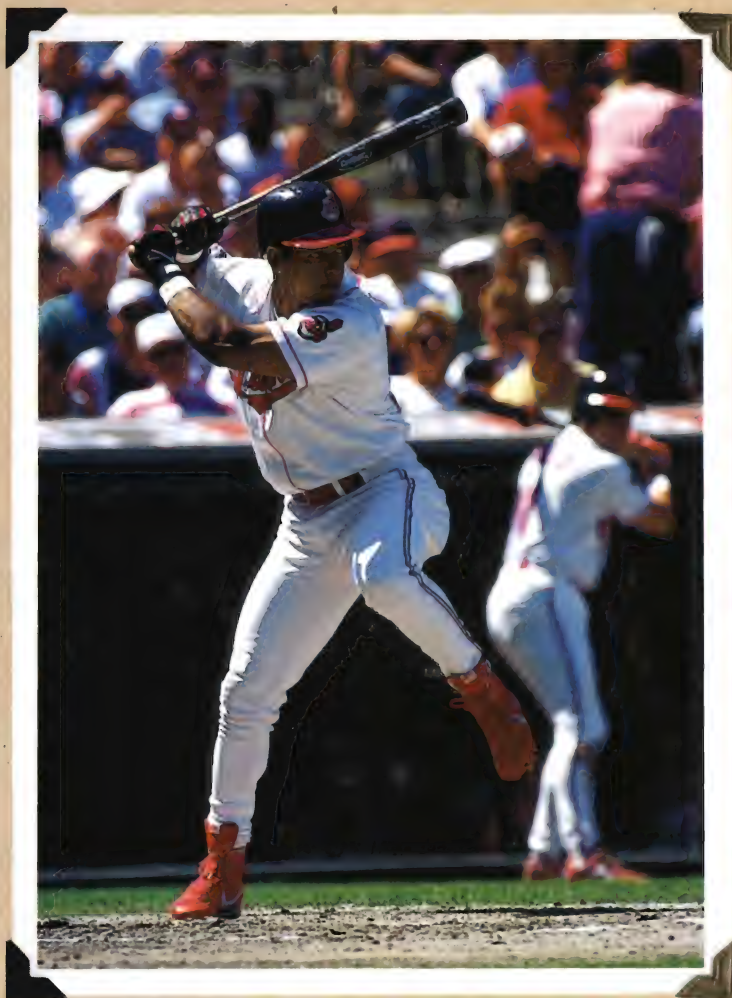
Sorrento batted for Winfield and lined a single off Pena's leg.

Then it got spookier.

Kennedy went to his bullpen again, calling for Derek Lilliquist, who had spent the previous three seasons as one of the Indians best relievers.

Lilliquist and the Indians parted company after his salary demands got a little too rich for the Tribe's tastes.

In his first appearance against his former team, Lilliquist served up a very tasty pitch to Thome, who hammered it into the seats down the right field line for a three-run home run.



Gregory Drezdzon

WILD WEEKEND IN BOSTON

Scoring from the seventh inning on in the four-game series:

Indians 19 Red Sox 3

Bullpen comparisons:

Indians: five runs allowed in 16.2 innings.

Red Sox: 20 runs allowed in 13.2 innings.

The Indians had scored six runs in the ninth inning—five after two outs—to turn a 5-3 Boston lead into a 9-5 Tribe victory... But that was just the beginning of the weekend of misery the Indians inflicted on the Red Sox.

Hargrove's decision not to bring in Assenmacher at that point, his determination to show confidence in Mesa, undoubtedly sent a message to Mesa himself.

From that point on, Mesa knew the ninth inning belonged to him and him alone.



Gregory Drezdson

They had done it again.

The Tribe scored four runs in the eighth inning to turn a 5-3 Boston lead into a 7-5 Indians victory.

"We've got an explosive club," said Plunk, who pitched 1 1/3 innings to get the win. "All you gotta do is keep 'em inside a handful of runs, and they can do it quick."

The bullpen was spectacular, as Plunk and Mesa struck out five of the last seven Boston batters to end the game.

The biggest of those strikeouts came in the ninth inning, and it was the moment Hargrove would point to for the rest of the season as the day Mesa came of age as the Tribe's closer.

With the Indians protecting their 7-5 lead, John Valentin singled with two outs in the bottom of the ninth.

That brought up left-handed hitting Mo Vaughn, who had gotten off to a monstrous start, and is one of the most feared hitters in the league.

"I had Assenmacher warming up in the bullpen," Hargrove said. "And I came close to using him there to pitch to Vaughn. But I figured that if Jose is ever going to be our closer, these are the kinds of situations he has to pitch in, and this is the kind of hitter he has to get out."

So Hargrove stuck with Mesa, and it paid off.

Mesa struck out Vaughn to end the game.

Hargrove's decision not to bring in Assenmacher at that point, his determination to show confidence in

Mesa, undoubtedly sent a message to Mesa himself.

From that point on, Mesa knew the ninth inning belonged to him, and him alone. To find out what THAT meant to Mesa, and how he responded to the challenge, check out his statistics for the 1995 season.

Act III of the Bruising of Boston came in Sunday's series finale, and in some ways it was the wildest of them all.

Black started, but never made it out of the third.

The Red Sox, who would collect 18 hits in the game, roughed up Black and Jason Grimsley, and after six innings the Indians trailed 8-4.

Heh-heh. The Indians had the Red Sox right where they wanted them.

In the seventh, Baerga blasted a two-run homer off Tim Lincecum. That cut the lead to 8-6, but when Tim Lincecum homered off Tavarez in the bottom of the seventh, it became 9-6.

No problem.

In the eighth, Ramirez clubbed an RBI double and Sorrento blasted a two-run home run off the beleaguered Ryan, and now it was 9-9.

And there was plenty more where that came from.

Baerga led off the ninth with a double off Jeff Pierce. Belle flied out, but Murray was intentionally walked to set up the double play.

Looking for a double play, the Red Sox found a play that was a double.

Thome ripped a rocket to right field for a two-base hit that scored Baerga, putting the Tribe in front 10-9, and sending Murray to third. Ramirez followed that with a two-run single, and suddenly the Indians were in front 12-9.

Mesa gave up a rare run in the ninth, but still picked up the save.

One footnote to the game came in the third inning when Erik Hanson struck out Baerga. It was the first time in the season that Baerga had struck out, and it came in his 97th plate appearance.

But it was hitting, not strikeouts, that accentuated this series. Especially clutch hitting. The Indians had scored two runs in the seventh, three in the eighth and three in the ninth, winning for the third straight day on dramatic late-inning rallies.

"We don't play for the big innings, but we seem to get a lot of them," Hargrove said. "We've got guys in our lineup who can hit them hard and hit them a long way. Plus, we've got guys who can get on base. That's a nice weapon to have."

In those three games at Boston, the Indians scored 28 runs on 37 hits. In the last three innings of those three games, the Tribe batted .409, with six home runs, and they outscored the Red Sox 19-2.

"You've got to make the pitchers pay for their mistakes," Belle said.

The Indians left Boston with the Red Sox pitchers having paid in full.

Winning three of four in Boston, brought the Indians home with a record of 6-2 on their east coast trip. They had also won 10 of their last 12 games to extend their overall

record to 15-6.

The Tribe's stay in Cleveland wasn't for long. A three-game series with Milwaukee saw the Indians lose two of three. That would stand as the only series the Indians lost for the first two months of the season.

The Tribe scored five runs in each of the three games, but Nagy and Clark were unable to make the runs stand. The Indians lone 5-3 victory in the series came in the middle game, in which Martinez picked up the win, to extend his record to 4-0.

The Indians then traveled to Toronto for their first meeting with the two-time defending World Series champion Blue Jays. The Indians home run barrage

continued at the SkyDome, where in the first game of the series they belted five home runs, two each by Ramirez and Sorrento, in a 7-4 Tribe victory.

In the second game of the series, the Indians were shut out for the first time in the season as Al Leiter tossed a six-hitter.

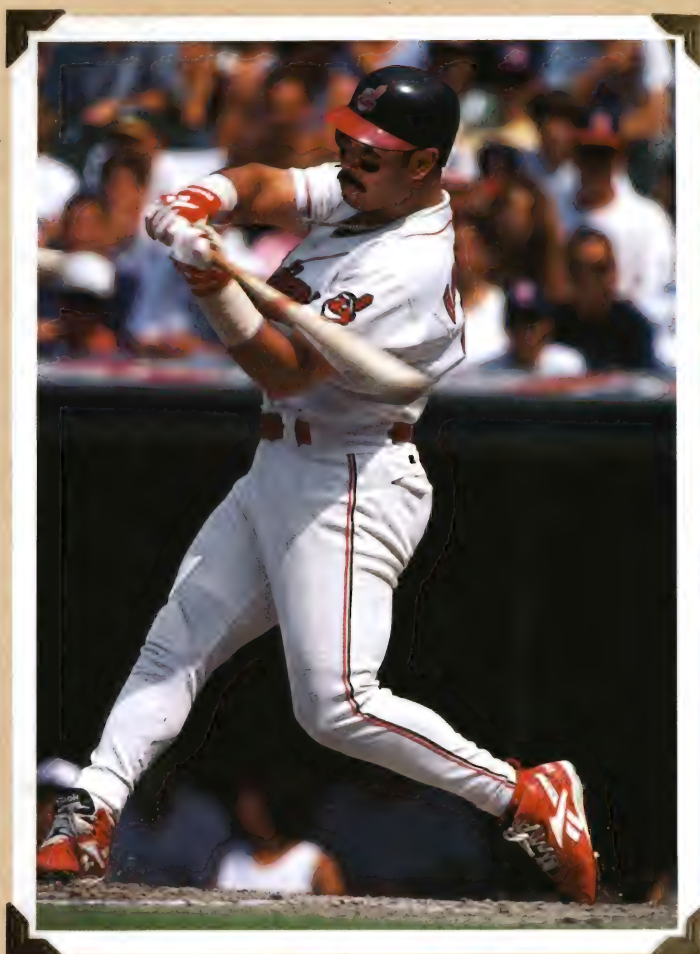
But in game three, the

Indians bounced back with three more homers (Ramirez, Thome, and Pena) in a 3-2 victory. That third game was one of Mesa's hairiest saves of the season. With the bases loaded and one out, Mesa got Ed Sprague to hit into a game-ending double play. That capped a disastrous day for Sprague, who had struck out in his first four at-bats.

"That was the game that told me I could do this job," Mesa said.

The Indians returned home with a record of 18-9 to face the White Sox in a four-game weekend series at the end of June. That series was looked upon as a barometer of where the two teams expected to compete for the

Carlos Baerga did not strike out in the first 20 games of the season, a span of 87 at-bats and 96 plate appearances... Erik Hanson of the Boston Red Sox was the first to accomplish the feat, fanning Baerga on May 21... Baerga and Chicago's Lance Johnson were among the toughest hitters in the AL, averaging a strikeout only every 20 at-bats.



Gregory Drezdson



Gregory Drezdson

Central Division crown stood in relation to one another.

The verdict: no contest.

The Indians swept the series in such convincing fashion that the day after it ended, White Sox manager Gene Lamont was fired.

The tone for the series was set in the first game, a 7-6 Tribe victory, the deciding run coming on an RBI double by Pena in the bottom of the eighth that broke a 6-6 tie.

Mesa then came on to pitch the ninth and retired the heart of the White Sox lineup—Tim Lincecum, Frank Thomas, and John Kruk—on six pitches. Mesa struck out Thomas on four pitches.

The Indians won the second game 2-1, Thome supplying one of the runs with a solo homer off Alex Fernandez. Indians pitchers also avoided trouble by pitching around Thomas every chance they got.

Tribe pitchers walked Thomas in each of his first four trips to the plate. Three of the four walks came on four pitches. None, technically, were intentional walks.

Game three of the series was a 6-3 Tribe win in which Hershisier was masterful, holding Chicago scoreless on one hit through the first six innings.

The final game on Sunday was a 7-4 Indians win, as Belle, Murray, Thome, and Sorrento all belted homers.

Thomas, meanwhile, was 2 for 10, with eight walks in the series.

The four-game sweep increased the first place Tribe's lead over Chicago from seven games to 11 games and effectively removed the White Sox from the Central Division race.

The four-game sweep increased the first place Tribe's lead over Chicago from seven games to 11 games, and effectively removed the White Sox from the Central Division race.

"We still consider the White Sox a very good team. We're not taking anything for granted," Hargrove said at the end of the series. "Don't get me wrong. I'm not minimizing the importance of this series, but there're still over 100 games to play, and a lot can happen."

The next day, Lamont was fired as White Sox manager.

And from that point on, the team that the Indians trailed by one game at the start of the strike in 1994, was no longer a factor in the race in '95.

The Indians Central Division lead was up to 5 1/2 games as the month of June began. As the weather heated up, so did the already simmering Tribe.

Starting with the final game of the Toronto series, and the four-game sweep of the White Sox, the Indians went on a tear in which they won 16 of 18 games, which pushed their overall record from 17-9 to 33-11.

Included in that run was a seven-game winning streak the first month of May that was the Tribe's longest of the season to that point.

The Indians won the last two games of a series with Toronto, swept Detroit in three games, then won the first two games of a four-game series in Milwaukee. The first game of that winning streak was a three-hit shutout by Martinez over the Blue Jays.

It was also the first complete game by an Indians pitcher in the season, and it improved Martinez's record to 5-0.

The next day, June 4, was one of the most incredible in Indians history. A victory so bizarre that those who saw it still shake their heads when they talk about it.

The Indians were trailing Toronto 7-0 after one inning and 8-0 after the top of the third. If that wasn't bad enough, the Tribe was facing Cy Young Award winner David Cone.

"Most people would say that when you're trailing the Cy Young winner 8-0, the odds aren't real good that you're going to do much," Hargrove said.

Wanna bet?

The Indians scored one in the third, two in the

fourth, two in the fifth, and one in the sixth inning. By the time they got to the bottom of the ninth, the Indians had whittled Toronto's lead down to 8-6.

With one out and runners at first and third, Thome reached on a fielder's choice grounder, which resulted in the runner from first being forced at second—but the runner from third scored. Toronto led 8-7, but now there were two outs.

That brought Paul Sorrento to the plate, Blue Jays pitcher Darren Hall threw one pitch.

When it returned to earth, the Indians had won 9-8.

Sorrento blasted a two-run home run into the seats in right field, triggering one of the loudest and most sustained roars ever heard at Jacobs Field. After trailing 8-0, the Indians had pulled out a 9-8 victory.

"I was just trying to keep the rally going. I wasn't trying to hit a home run," Sorrento said.

It was the most dramatic of numerous dramatic 11th hour victories for the Indians in 1995. Late heroics almost became the norm for the Tribe, to the extent that no lead was safe for the opposing team.

"I've never seen anything like this, I've never heard of anything like this, and I've never read about anything like this," Indians bench coach Buddy Bell said following Sorrento's home run. "It's like you're in a dream and you never want to wake up."

Said Hargrove: "I don't know that you expect us to keep winning games in the last inning like that, but I think we've proven to our fans that it's not a good idea to leave early."

"I've never seen anything like this, I've never heard of anything like this, and I've never read anything like this. It's like you're in a dream and you never want to wake up." —Buddy Bell

LATE-INNING MAGIC

As of 9/21, the Indians recorded 26 wins in their final at-bat in 1995, while 44 victories were in comeback fashion... Of the last 26 at-bat wins, 16 came at Jacobs Field, including eight game-ending home runs... Albert Belle hit three, Manny Ramirez hit a pair while Sandy Alomar, Paul Sorrento and Eddie Murray hit one apiece.

On June 5, Lofton belted two home runs and Hershiser tossed his first shutout since undergoing shoulder surgery five years ago as the Indians beat the Tigers 8-0.

Hershiser, who faced the minimum three batters in five of the nine innings, struck out 10 and did not walk a batter. He called it his most dominating performance since his surgery.

Two nights later, June 7, Thome sent another Jacobs Field crowd home happy as he led off the bottom of the 10th inning with a home run off Brian Maxcy, lifting the Indians to a 3-2 win over the Tigers.

The next night in Milwaukee, Thome did it again. He ripped a two-run home run in the top of the ninth off Bill Wegman, that capped a four-run Tribe rally and turned what looked like a 7-3 Tribe loss into an 8-7 victory.

The Indians won three of four from the Brewers in that series, but in the process they lost Dave Winfield. On June 10, Winfield strained the rotator cuff in his left shoulder while running the bases. He was placed on the disabled list on June 12, and would remain there for five weeks.

Herbert Perry was called up from Buffalo to replace Winfield as the Indians DH vs. left-handed pitching.



and Perry wasted little time in making a contribution. On June 17 vs. the Yankees at Jacobs Field, Perry, making his second start, ripped two home runs and a single in a 7-4 Tribe victory.

"I'm just trying to help out wherever I can," he said. "When you get called up to a first place team, you want to make sure you're not the one to do anything to slow it down."

Perry didn't slow down the Indians, and neither did many American League teams. On June 19, Boston came to Jacobs Field, and the first game was nearly a carbon copy of the type of crushing late-inning defeat the Indians handed the Sox in Boston a month earlier.

This time it was a home run by Ramirez leading off the bottom of the 10th inning to give the Indians a 4-3 win. The home run came off reliever Ken Ryan, whom the Tribe had roughed up during the late inning massacres in Boston.

The next night, rookie Chad Ogea ran his record to 3-0 by holding the Red Sox to one run on five hits over eight innings in a 9-2 Tribe win.

Gregg Olson pitched the ninth inning for the Indians in that game. Olson, the former ace of the Orioles' bullpen, had been spending the last two years trying to come back from elbow problems. The Indians signed him as a reclamation project in spring training, and he had spent the first six weeks of the season at Triple-A Buffalo making steady progress.

However, the Indians contract with Olson stipulated that should he, at any time, get offered a Major League contract by another team, the Indians would either call him up from Buffalo, or let him sign with the team making the offer.

Ironically, it was the Red Sox, the team whose bullpen was exposed by the Indians in those three miracle comebacks in Boston in mid-May, who ultimately offered Olson a Major League contract in mid-June.

With their hand forced, the Indians called up Olson from Buffalo on June 18, even though there was no clearly defined role for him in the bullpen, since Mesa had immediately established himself as the team's closer.

"I feel a little like I forced myself onto the team, but I figured I win either way," Olson said. "Either I come to Cleveland, a first place team, or I go to Boston, a first place team."

Hart and Hargrove said Olson had made significant progress at Buffalo.

"He's close to where he was with Baltimore," Hart said.

In reality, however, the Indians were unable to find a niche for Olson in the bullpen, and after using him just

three times in one month, the Indians finally designated him for assignment, and eventually traded him to Kansas City.

The Indians lost the third game of the Boston series, 3-1, on June 21 before 41,948, the largest crowd to that point ever to see a game at Jacobs Field.

Hershiser started that game, and left in the fourth inning with a strained lower back, an injury that would result in him being placed on the disabled list two days later.

On June 23, the Indians paid their first visit to



Gregory Drezdzon

Chicago since the infamous Albert Belle corked bat incident of July 19, 1994. This visit, however, was more significant because it was the Indians first meeting with the White Sox since the Tribe's four-game sweep in Cleveland three weeks earlier.

The White Sox got a measure of revenge in the series as they swept all three games, which reduced the Tribe's lead over second-place Kansas City to 5 1/2 games.

The first game, June 21, was a 12-5 Chicago win. It marked the first time since the second and third games of the season that the Indians had lost consecutive games.

The Chicago series was the beginning of a 10-game road trip that would also include stops in Kansas City and Minnesota. It had the potential for being a historic trip for Murray, who began the trip with 2,991 career hits, nine shy of 3,000.

Asked if he might sit Murray down for a game or two on the trip in hopes that he would delay Murray's 3,000th hit until the Indians returned to Jacobs Field, Hargrove said he would do no such thing.

"I'd love for Eddie to do it at home," Hargrove said. "But our No. 1 priority is to win games. If I rest him on this trip, it won't be because I want him to break it at home."

As for the sagging Indians-ChiSox rivalry—the Indians led fifth place Chicago by 16 1/2 games at the start of the series—Hargrove said he was assuming nothing.

"We certainly don't consider them dead in the water," he said. "You can't take them for granted."

Prior to the first game of the Chicago series, the Indians placed Hershiser on the disabled list with a strained lower back. To replace him, they called up Albie Lopez from Buffalo.

The White Sox won the second game of the series 8-3, then completed the sweep on Sunday with a 3-2 win.

Murray was 1 for 9 in the series, and as the Indians headed to Kansas City, he was eight hits shy of 3,000. But more importantly, the Indians were leading the Royals by just 5 1/2 games.

After giving up 23 runs in three games in Chicago, the Indians needed the pitchers to step it up in Kansas City, which, as it turned out, became a sort of watershed series for the Tribe's season, and a springboard to their runaway season in the Central Division.

The Indians got three brilliantly pitched games, holding Kansas City to a total of three runs in three games, all of them Tribe victories.

In game one, Ogea and three relievers combined on a 2-0 shutout. In game two, Clark and Plunk combined on a five-hitter in a 7-1 victory. And in game three, the Indians beat Kevin Appier (who was 11-2 at the time), 5-2.

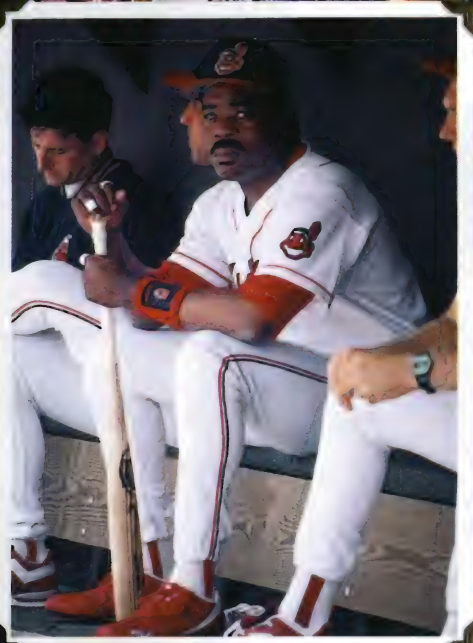
The Indians had rebounded from a four-game losing streak with a three-game sweep, which pushed their lead to a much more comfortable 8 1/2 games. That's the closest the rest of the division would get to the Indians the rest of the year.

Murray had three hits in the middle game of the series, and five hits overall. As the Indians headed for Minnesota, where they would face the league's worst pitching staff, Murray needed just three hits for 3,000. It didn't look like history was going to wait for the Indians to get back to Cleveland.

A career .306 hitter vs. the Twins, Murray began the series against Minnesota's beleaguered pitching staff as though he intended to get the circus-type atmosphere surrounding his countdown to 3,000 hits over as quickly as possible.

At Jacobs Field, a banner had been hung from the left field walkway on which the last 33 hits (in deference to Murray's uniform number) to 3,000 would be counted down. Every time Murray got a hit, the number would be reduced by one.

"It hasn't been a distraction," said Hargrove, of Murray's march to 3,000 hits. "It's good for Eddie, it's good for the Cleveland Indians, and it's good for baseball."

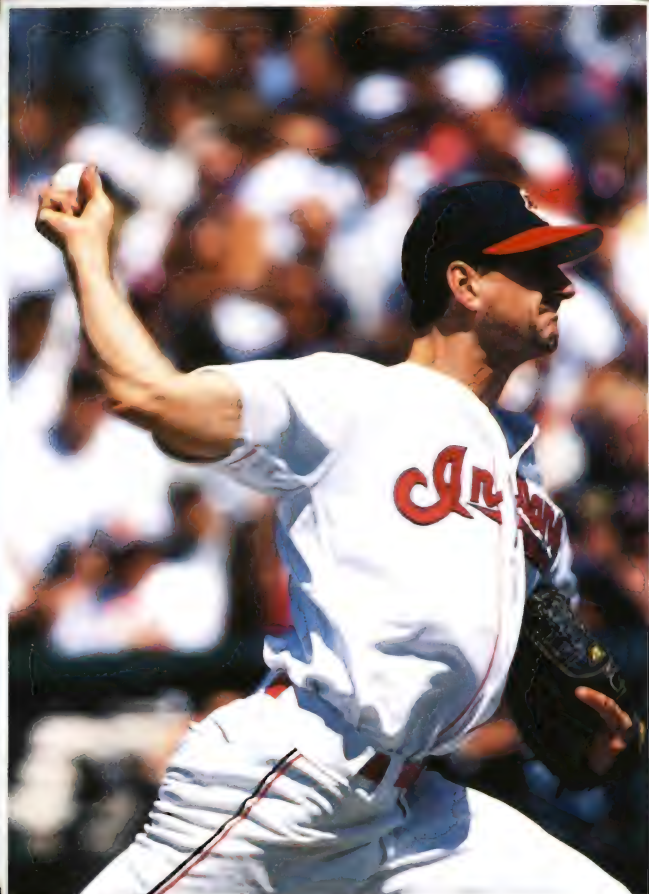


Photos Gregory Drezdson



THE 1995 CLEVELAND INDIANS





Indians were the first team since the 1979 Red Sox (Fred Lynn, Jim Rice, and Carl Yastrzemski) to have three outfielders named to either the American or National League All-Star teams.

Meanwhile, the Indians kept winning.

Even without Murray.

The Indians finished the month of June with a record of 41-17, and a nine-game lead over second place Kansas City in the Central Division.

The day Murray went on the disabled list, July 3, the Indians blasted Texas 9-1 at Jacobs Field.

Nagy pitched seven shutout innings to get the win, boosting his record to 6-4.

"I just sat back and watched our guys score runs," Nagy said. "That's what this team is all about. We've got hitters stacked up. Eddie gets hurt, and tonight Kenny (Lofton) is our DH. That's not a bad fill in."

Lofton was the DH that night because he was nursing a bruised nerve in his leg.

The Indians, in fact, were still trying to get their projected lineup on the field for the first time in 1995. That lineup was Lofton, Vizquel, Baerga, Belle, Murray, Thome, Ramirez, Sorrento, and Alomar.

Alomar had missed the first two months of the season following knee surgery. He had been activated in Minnesota, and in the 9-1 win over Texas, his third

start of the season, Alomar clubbed a home run and two doubles.

"It's been a long and bumpy road, but I'm here," Alomar said. "One game doesn't dictate how I'll play the rest of the season, but it gives me confidence that all my hard work has paid off."

To make room on the roster for Alomar, the Indians placed Scooter Tucker, acquired in a minor league trade with Houston, on waivers. Tucker was 0 for 20 with the Indians, and will be best remembered as a player whom opposing pitchers walked five times, even though he didn't have any hits.

Following Murray's injury, the Indians won 15 of their next 19 games, showing the kind of depth that would be an asset all season.

That streak included a seven-game winning streak, and a streak in which they won 11 of 12 games—all of them coming against teams in the tough AL West.

The pitching was sensational in that stretch.

On July 5 at Jacobs Field, Martinez, Poole, and Mesa combined on a two-hitter in a 2-0 win over Texas.

Martinez was nearly perfect in that game, retiring 18 of the 19 batters he faced. The only runner who reached base against him was Rusty Greer, on an infield single in the first inning. Martinez retired the next seven men in a row, sat out a two hour rain delay, then returned





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The Indians were amply supported in the Oakland series by about 1,000 Indians fans. Some were members of the West Coast Wahoo Club, others made the trip from Cleveland. One member of the latter group was John Adams, who has been pounding his drum at Indians games for years.



Gregory Drezdson

"I hung a slider, and he hit it into the barbeque area," Smith said simply.

The season was barely half over, and the Indians had already supplied about five years worth of thrills.

The Indians rode the wings of Belle's stunning grand slam to the start of their longest road trip of the season, a 12-game journey that would take them to all of the cities in the AL West.

The Indians went 8-4 on the trip, which they began by winning the first six games, extending their overall winning streak to seven games, matching their season high to that point.

The trip began in Texas, where the Indians swept a two-game series. Before leaving, however, Tribe players presented a gag team photo to Rangers pitcher Bob Tewksbury, who over the All-Star break had publicly blasted the Indians for their "lack of professionalism."

The Indians laughed off the charge, and took a photo of Tribe players in various mixed and matched uniforms, slouching informally in front of the camera. Then they signed the photo and presented it to Tewksbury.

"I thanked them for it," laughed Tewksbury. "I've been trying to get Eddie Murray's autograph for four years."

From Texas, the Indians flew to Oakland, where they again swept the A's in three games. The first of those games was a 6-1 victory in which Martinez went the distance to improve his record to 9-0.

The next day, July 22, the Indians zapped Eckersley again, scoring three runs off him in the top of the ninth inning to turn a 4-3 Oakland lead into a 6-4 Indians win, as Mesa struck out the side in the bottom of the ninth to pick up his 25th save in 25 opportunities.

The three-game sweep in Oakland completed a sea-

son series sweep of the A's by the Indians, the second straight year the Indians had swept the A's. The Indians have won the last 13 games between the two teams.

"I think that's a fluke more than anything," said Hargrove of the Tribe's dominance of the A's.

The Indians were amply supported in the Oakland series by about 1,000 Indians fans, some of whom were members of the West Coast Wahoo Club. Others made the trip from Cleveland. One member of the latter group was John Adams, who has been pounding his drum at Indians games in Cleveland for years.

Following the sweep of the A's, the Indians went to Anaheim, where on July 24 they scored two runs off Smith in the bottom of the 10th inning to beat the AL West leaders 9-7. That rally stretched the Tribe's winning streak to seven, all but two of them coming on the road.

The win also marked the fourth time in the last nine days that the Indians had beaten future Hall of Famers Eckersley and Smith in last-inning rallies.

The winning streak ended the next night, July 25, as the Angels beat the Tribe 6-5. California won two of three, and the Indians went on to Seattle, where the two teams split four games.

Before the end of the trip, however, the Indians made a move designed to bolster their pitching for the second half and the post-season. On July 27, four days before the trading deadline, they traded Buffalo third baseman David Bell, and minor leaguers Rick Heiserman (a pitcher) and Pepe McNeal (a catcher) to St. Louis for Ken Hill.

"Along with Kevin Appier, Ken was THE most desirable free agent pitcher last winter," Hart said. "We've always liked him very much."

Continued on page 110.

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Photos Gregory Drezdson

"Any time you can add a starter who has been a No. 1 starter on a Major League team—the more of those guys you get on your staff, the better you are."
—Mark Wiley, Indians pitching coach

"Pitching coach Mark Wiley scouted Hill last year in the National League.

"Any time you can add a starter who has been a No. 1 starter on a Major League team—the more of those guys you get on your staff, the better you are," Wiley said. "Ken has done all the things a No. 1 does, including beating other teams' No. 1 starters."

Hill was put into the rotation, and Clark was sent to the bullpen.

Hill's first start for the Indians was July 28 in Seattle. The Indians won 6-5, though Hill, who pitched six innings and allowed two runs, was not involved in the decision.

"I liked what I saw," Hargrove said of Hill. "He kept the ball down, made some good pitches, and he might be the best fielding pitcher I've ever seen."

Hill was one of several pitchers who were dealt in the days leading up to the trading deadline. The Indians outbid the Colorado Rockies for Hill.

Said Colorado manager Don Baylor, after finding out the Indians had landed Hill: "What, do they think they have to win by 25 games?"

Maybe.

The Indians finished the month of July with a record of 59-26, and a 17 1/2 game lead over second place Kansas City.

The Tribe returned home for a six-game series with Minnesota and Chicago, and the Indians won four of them. Belle hit three home runs in the first two games against the Twins, and Hill won his first game for the Indians on August 3, a 6-4 decision over Minnesota.

On August 1, both Murray and Lofton (strained rib cage) came off the disabled list. The Indians had actually increased their lead in the division while those two key players were out, but the scariest part for other American League teams was that the Indians had built their monster lead in the division without their No. 1 lineup on the field. On August 2, for the first time in 1995, the Indians finally fielded the lineup they projected as their starting lineup in spring training: Lofton, Vizquel, Baerga, Belle, Murray, Thome, Ramirez, Sorrento, and Alomar.

The White Sox then returned to Jacobs Field, and in the first two games of that series, August 4-5, the Indians outscored Chicago 24-10 in winning both games.

In the eighth inning of the Indians 13-3 win on August 4, the White Sox pitcher was outfielder Dave Martinez. Not wanting to waste a pitcher in a blowout, acting manager Joe Nosssek had Martinez pitch the bottom of the eighth.

Martinez walked two, but retired Alomar and Vizquel on fly balls, and got Baerga to ground into a force out.

"He got me out—me and Omar stink," said Alomar with a laugh. "I was laughing my butt off up there. After I made the out, Martinez said, 'Don't feel bad.'"

The next day, August 5, Belle again hit two home

This movie has a beginning, a middle, and about 20 happy endings.

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runs, and the Indians won 11-7. The home runs gave Belle six homers in the last seven games.

"This is really the first time he's put together one of his streaks," Hargrove said. "Hopefully he can stay in it for 2 1/2 months."

The Indians weathered a brief three-game losing streak, one loss to Chicago, followed by two in Boston, which was the start of a 10-game east coast trip.

The Indians then went to New York for a five-game series that started August 10 with a doubleheader. The Yankees were trying to make a move on first place Boston, and they had just recently acquired pitcher David Cone from Toronto and called up outfielder Darryl Strawberry from Triple-A Columbus.

The Indians, however, swept the doubleheader, winning the first game with another wild ninth inning in which the Indians scored five runs, most of the damage coming against Yankee closer John Wetteland, which turned a 9-5 New York lead into a 10-9 Indians win.

The Tribe won the second game 5-2, and for the second time this season the Indians had swept a doubleheader—and Mesa had recorded saves in both games.

That gave Mesa 32 saves in 32 opportunities. And that left him four shy of Eckersley's record for most consecutive saves in one season.

The Indians won the third game of the Yankee series, lost the last two, then took two out of three in Baltimore to return to Cleveland with a record of 5-5 on the trip.

It was then, like Murray earlier in the season, that Mesa started stalking history.

The Indians opened a four-game series with Milwaukee at Jacobs Field, and Mesa began the series with 35 saves in 35 chances. Eckersley's record was 36.

The Indians lost the first game, August 17, 7-3.

The second game was a 7-5 Tribe victory. Mesa pitched a scoreless ninth, which gave him 36 saves, tying Eckersley's record.

The Indians won the third game of the series, 4-3,

but Mesa was not needed.

On August 20, the Indians needed Mesa—and, as usual, he delivered, and wrote his name in the record books in the process. After the Indians scored five runs in the bottom of the eighth to take an 8-5 lead over the Brewers, Mesa came on to pitch the ninth.

"That was the only time all year I saw the pressure get to Jose a little," Hargrove said.

Mesa, who had a high percentage of 1-2-3 innings among those 36 saves, retired the first two batters, but then walked Jeff Cirillo.

Mesa struck out Jose Valentin, but he crossed up Alomar on the pitch, and Alomar was unable to hang onto the ball. Valentin made it safely to first, and all of a sudden the Brewers had two on and two out, with pinch-hitter Matt Mieske at the plate.

But Mesa got Mieske to ground out to Baerga for the final out of the game. It was his 37th consecutive save, a new Major League record.

"I don't think anyone could have thought up anything as improbable as this," said Hargrove of Mesa's emergence into the premier closer in the game.

Mesa said he never felt any pressure.

"I just try to go out there every time and do my job," he said. "The kind of team we have, they score so many runs that a lot of times my saves come when I have two or three run leads. I haven't had a lot of one-run saves.

THE RECORD

Jose Mesa set a Major League record by recording his 37th straight save in a single season on August 20th vs. the Milwaukee Brewers. Mesa recorded 38 straight before ending his streak on August 25 vs. the Detroit Tigers. The previous record for save conversions in a single season was held by Dennis Eckersley of the Oakland Athletics, who saved 36 straight for the A's in 1992.



Gregory Drezdson

That takes some of the pressure off, too."

Mesa's streak was finally halted on August 26, at Jacobs Field, against the Tigers.

But not before Belle blasted two home runs in the game, giving him 31 for the season and making him the first Indians player to hit 30 or more home runs in four consecutive seasons.

Thanks largely to Belle's home runs, the Indians took a 5-4 lead into the ninth. Mesa jogged in from the bullpen once again, and he retired the first two batters he faced.

Then came the unexpected.

Chad Curtis hit a line drive over the right field fence for a home run that snapped all kinds of streaks. It halted Mesa's Major League record at 37 saves in 37 opportunities. It also halted a streak of 29 consecutive innings in which Mesa had not allowed an earned run. And it was only the second home run of the season allowed by Mesa. The other home run was hit by Texas' Dean Palmer, and it came in Mesa's first appearance of the season, April 30.

"You don't expect something like that, but Curtis has 16 homers. He's not a popcorn hitter," Hargrove said. "It had to end sooner or later, I just wished it would have ended sometime next year."

In typical Mesa style, he was unfazed by the end of his historic streak.

"Nobody's perfect. I told you this was going to happen sometime," he said. "I'll just start another streak tomorrow. Sometimes you've got to take your hat off to the hitter. He hit my fastball, and that's my best pitch."

But on a night when their closer proved he was human, the Indians offense bailed out the man who had bailed them out of so many jams.

After Curtis' home run tied it at 5-5, Alomar ripped a home run off Felipe Lira in the bottom of the 11th inning to give the Tribe a 6-5 victory.

To that point, it was the Indians 21st victory in their last at-bat, and the seventh time a Tribe player had hit a game-ending home run.

"We've hit so many home runs to win games, it's like we don't expect a single or double. We expect a home run," Alomar said. "When I saw the ball headed for the left field wall, I said to myself, 'Get out of here—It's almost midnight!'"

It was a season in which the clock never seemed to strike midnight for the Indians.

It was never too late to hit a game-winning home run, never too late for Mesa to save a game, never too late for Vizquel to bring fans out of their seats with a game-saving play at shortstop.

And it was never too late for a pitcher to pull himself out of a slump.

That's what happened the next night, August 26, at Jacobs Field, when Nagy struck out a career-high 12 and did not walk a batter as the

Indians kicked their record to 40 games over .500 (75-35) with a 6-2 win over the Tigers.

Although the win boosted Nagy's record to 11-5, it was just his second win since July 19, and everyone agreed that his impressive record was due largely to the fact that the Indians scored an average of seven runs in games Nagy had started.

Hargrove said part of Nagy's problem during the slump was due to the fact that he was giving too much credit to opposing hitters and wasn't challenging them.

"You're in the big leagues for a reason, and the reason you're here is that you belong here," Hargrove said. "Sometimes you just have to trust your ability."

"We've hit so many home runs to win games, it's like we don't expect a single or double. We expect a home run. When I saw the ball headed for the left field wall, I said to myself, 'Get out of here—It's almost midnight!'" —Sandy Alomar



Gregory Drezdson

Charlie was trying to make perfect pitches every time, then when he fell behind in the count, he tried to make an even more perfect pitch. That's not the way to pitch."

The Indians completed a three-game sweep of the Tigers on August 27 as Herishier held Detroit to four hits over six innings in running his record to 12-5.

The Indians outscored the Tigers 21-9 in the three games. And you can bet the Tigers aren't looking forward to their first visit to Jacobs Field next year. The Indians have won eight in a row from Detroit at Jacobs Field, and the Tigers' two-year record vs. the Indians in the new Ballpark is 1-12.

The victory reduced the Indians magic number for clinching the Central Division crown to 15.

"This is rare to be looking at a magic number in August," Hershiser said. "Usually that doesn't start until the last week or two of the season."

The magic number was on Hargrove's mind as well, but for a different reason.

Hargrove asked the scoreboard crew at Jacobs Field to refrain from displaying the magic number immediately after each Tribe victory, at least until the magic number got under 10.

"The last thing we need to be looking at now is a magic number," Hargrove said.

Ignoring the magic number didn't make it go away, and at the rate the Indians were winning, the magic number was shrinking with the speed of a Mesa fastball.

The three-game sweep of the Tigers triggered one of the most blistering streaks of the season for the Tribe, who, once they got to within shouting distance of clinching the division, seemingly couldn't win games fast enough.

They followed the three-game sweep of the Tigers with a four-game sweep of the Blue Jays, which capped a perfect 7-0 homestand for the rampaging Tribe.

The last two games of the Toronto series were two of the more memorable games of the season, and the first two games weren't exactly snoozers, either.

In the first game, August 28, the Indians hit three home runs in a 9-1 rout of the Jays. The Indians scored seven runs in the second inning to blow the game open. In that inning, the Indians sent 11 men to the plate. Murray had three RBI—a solo home run and a two-run single. The homer was his 16th of the season, and the 474th of his career, leaving him one shy of Stan Musial and Willie Stargell for 16th place on baseball's all-time list.

Also in that game, Ramirez belted his 30th home run, making him, at age 23, the second youngest player in Tribe history to hit 30 home runs in a season. The youngest: Hal Trosky, who hit 35 home runs in 1934, when he was 21.

"Nothing Manny does surprises me," Hargrove said. "He is a very good hitter, and a very intelligent hitter."

In the second game, Mark Clark tossed a three-hit complete game as the Indians prevailed, 4-1. Murray picked up career RBI No. 1,800.

Then came two games that added to the Belle legend, as the Tribe slugger won back-to-back games with game-ending home runs in extra innings.

The first game, on August 30, lasted 14 innings, and for a moment it appeared that the Indians perfect record in extra inning

games was going to be snapped. Toronto scored a run in the top of the 14th inning to take a 3-2 lead.

But in the bottom of the 14th, Lofton led off with a triple and later scored the tying run on a sacrifice fly by Baerga.

Belle then ended the game by hammering a gigantic home run into the bleachers in left-center field off reliever Tony Castillo.

Twenty-four hours later, Belle did it again.

On the last night in August, the Blue Jays took a 4-3 lead into the bottom of the ninth, but another sacrifice fly by Baerga knocked in the tying run, and sent the game into extra innings.

In the bottom of the 10th, Thome drew a one-out



Gregory Drezdson



The game-ending home run became such a habit with the Indians, that Alomar said the team almost expects something good to happen in extra innings, especially with Belle at the plate.

walk from reliever Jimmy Rogers. Then came more Belle thunder. This time his home run was jerked down the left field line, landing among a throng of delirious Tribe fans on the pavilion above the left field wall.

It was the Indians eighth game-ending home run of the season at Jacobs Field—three of those by Belle. It was also the Tribe's 23rd win in its last at-bat.

"I'm just glad he did it in the 10th inning this time, instead of the 14th," joked Hargrove.

"I think we're trying to make 'Major League III' but with the real players," Alomar said.

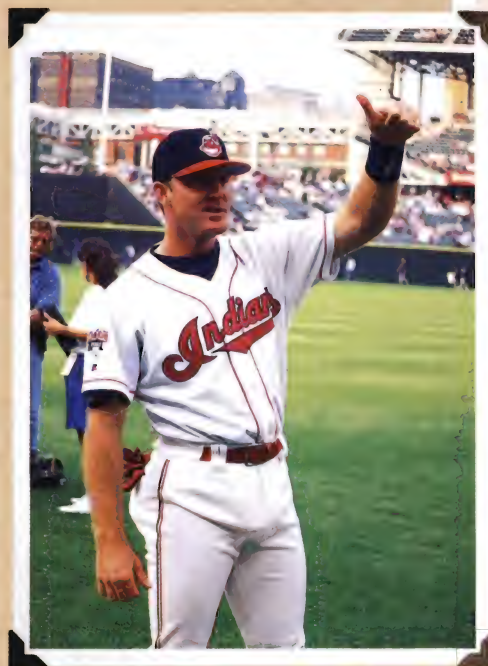
The victory also pushed the Indians record in extra innings to 11-0. Alomar attributed that record to the Indians no let-up lineup.

"There are no guys you can pitch around in our lineup," he said. "Everyone is hitting around .300, or for a good average. And we're all good clutch hitters."

The game-ending home run became such a habit with the Indians, that Alomar said the team almost expects something good to happen in extra innings, especially with Belle at the plate.

"When you see Albert up there in that situation, you just start picking up your stuff," Alomar said. "He's done it so many times before."

The sweep of the Jays was the Indians first four-game sweep of Toronto in Cleveland since 1980. It also extended the Indians winning streak to eight games as they left for Detroit, and a four-game series that was played before more Cleveland fans than Detroit fans.



Photos Gregory Drezdzon

"Sometimes you get to a point in road games where you reach a little dead spot, and when we reached it, the fans really got into the game and got us out of it. That's why we play so well at home, because of the fans." —Jim Thome

Indians fans poured into Detroit for the series, virtually turning each game into an Indians home game.

An estimated 3,000 to 4,000 Indians fans were at each game, and most of them carried signs and made enough noise for a crowd twice that size.

"It's pennant fever, that's what it is," Thome said. "They said it was going to happen when we got good, and it has. This shows the kind of respect our fans have."

Thome said he felt the noise the Indians fans made during the third game of the series had a lot to do with the Tribe's 9-8 victory.

"Sometimes you get to a point in road games where you reach a little dead spot, and when we reached it, the fans really got into the game and got us out of it," Thome said. "That's why we play so well at home, because of the fans."

Harold Baines flied out to Kirby in right field for the second out. But Chris Hoiles prolonged the drama by drawing a walk.

That brought Jeff Huson to the plate.

It was 11:02 p.m.

With the crowd on its feet and cheering every pitch, Huson sliced a weak pop-up near third base. Thome moved under it, and when the ball settled into his glove the Indians 41-year championship drought was over.

Indians players poured out of the dugout to celebrate the franchise's first championship since 1954, when they won 111 games and the American League pennant.

Indians players exchanged hugs, and the crowd stood and cheered.

"Tell me I'm not dreaming" and "Finally!" were two of the dozens of signs seen in the stands.

The Indians briefly left the field, then returned wearing white T-shirts and caps commemorating their Central Division championship. The Tribe players unfurled the Central Division banner, carried it to center field,



The Indians clinched the division in their 123rd game. With this being a 144-game season, the Indians needed 85 percent of their games to clinch. That's the lowest percentage of games played by any league or division winner on the day they clinched since 1901. The date of the clinching was also a record. September 8 is the earliest clinching date for any American League team since the start of division play in 1969.



then personally hoisted it to the flag pole on top of the scoreboard.

It had been 41 years between titles for the Indians, but they apparently tried to make up for it by barreling their way to the division crown with record speed.

The Indians clinched the division in their 123rd game. With this being a 144-game season, the Indians needed 85 percent of their games to clinch. That's the lowest percentage of games played by any league or division winner on the day they clinched since 1901.

The date of clinching was also a record.

September 8 is the earliest clinching date for any American League team since the start of division play in 1969. The previous record was Sept. 13 by the 1969 Orioles.

"Words can't describe this feeling," said Thome. "That's something you dream about. 'To have the last ball hit to you in a game like that. This is awesome.'"

Thome spoke amid pools of champagne, the result of showers of the bubbly that flew in torrents inside the Tribe clubhouse.

Photos Gregory Drezdson

Indians owner Richard Jacobs was drenched two or three times, once by Baerga, another time by Tavaréz.

"I usually take champagne through the throat," laughed a saturated Jacobs.

In another corner of the clubhouse, Pena poured a bucket of ice water over Hart's head.

In another corner, Alomar, one of the senior members of the Tribe in terms of service, was overwhelmed.

"This is what baseball is all about. Winning," Alomar said. "I've been here six years and seen a lot. One hundred and five losses, injuries, and disappointment. This makes it all worth it. It's baseball at it's best. My brother has two (World Series) rings, my Dad has one. I'm the only one in my family without one. I guess it's my turn now."

Baerga came to Cleveland in the same trade that brought Alomar from San Diego in 1989.

"This means so much to me, I can't say," Baerga said. "I was here when we lost 105 games. We'd go onto the field knowing we couldn't compete with the other team. Every player dreams of playing in the World Series. I got my gift today."

Hershiser, who goes into the books as the winning pitcher in the first clinching game for the Indians in 41 years, was seen choking back tears on the field as the Central Division banner was being hoisted to the top of the scoreboard.

"They were playing 'The Dance' (by Garth Brooks) after the game, and the last time I heard that song was at Timmy (Crews) and Steve's (Olin) funeral. I was thinking about those guys, both great guys who are not in this world," Hershiser said.

The Tribe righthander said the division title is exactly the reason he signed with the Indians in April.

"It's fantastic to think I signed with the Indians in the first year they've won a title in 41 years," he said. "But I viewed this as a present to the city. It was inevitable that we were going to win it. But to do it the first time we have a chance to, it felt like it was time to open the gift. Heck, we had the champagne and the T-shirts ready. We might as well do it now. I didn't want to wait

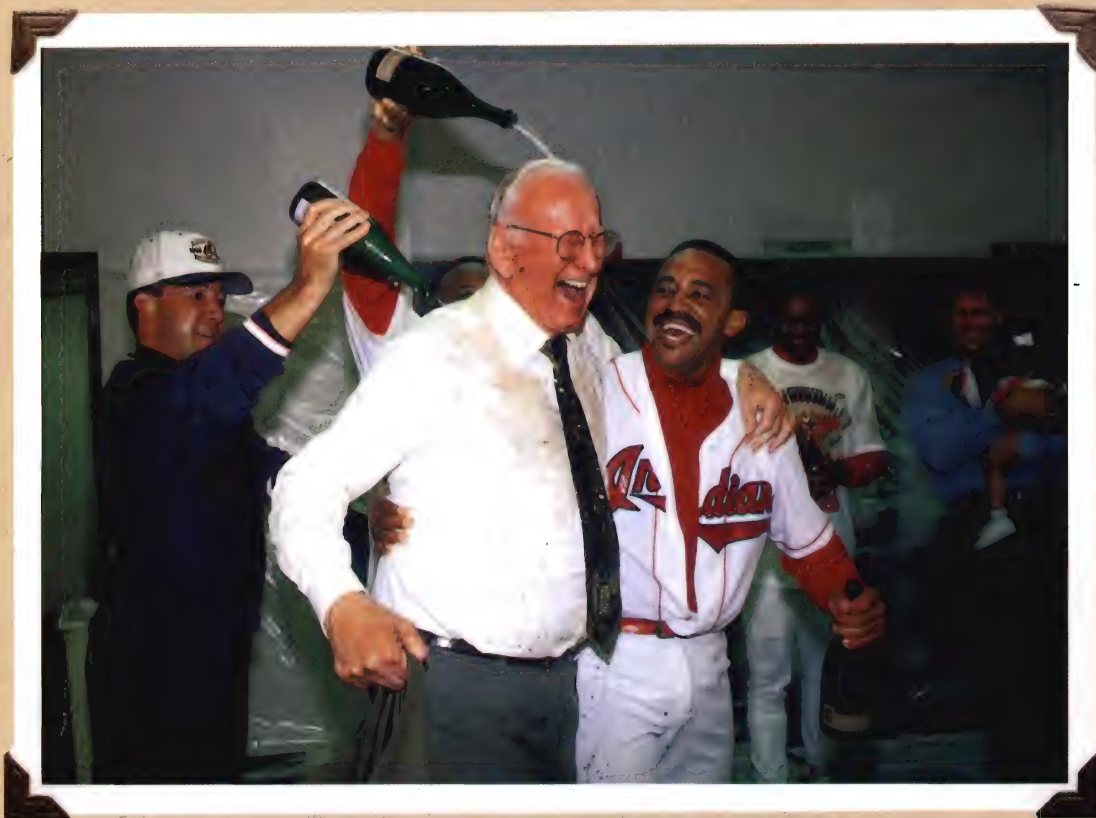
to see how Kansas City did."

Murray, like Hershiser, was a veteran brought in by Tribe management for the specific purpose of leading the team to where it got on September 8.

"If we win the whole thing, then that will make this even more special," Murray said. "I know one thing. If we win it all, Cleveland will be like New York on New Year's Eve. This town is ready to erupt."

Belle, speaking between rivers of champagne rolling down his face, said a division crown was hopefully just the first step.

"That banner is one. We've got more banners to add to it. We're looking forward to winning it all," he said.



Gregory Drezdson

Hargrove, who appeared very moved by the on-field celebration following the game, was almost speechless.

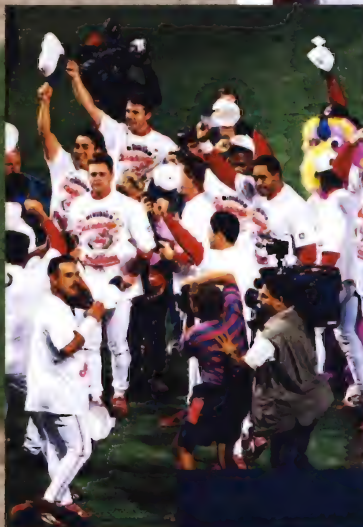
"I don't know if you can describe how this feels," Hargrove said. "I'm at a loss for words. I've gone into a lot of ballparks through the years, and you go into Oakland or Baltimore or New York and see all the pennants hanging there. To see the first one go up in Cleveland after 41 years makes you feel very proud."

Hart said it felt like life was imitating art.

"Life is not always like the movies," Hart said. "But this is just like the movies. It's a dream come true."

Said Thome: "This is why you play baseball."

The GALLERY

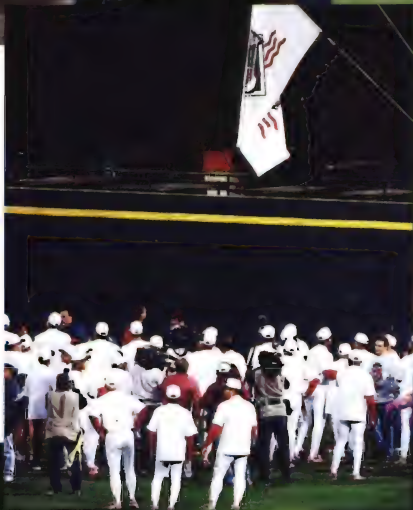


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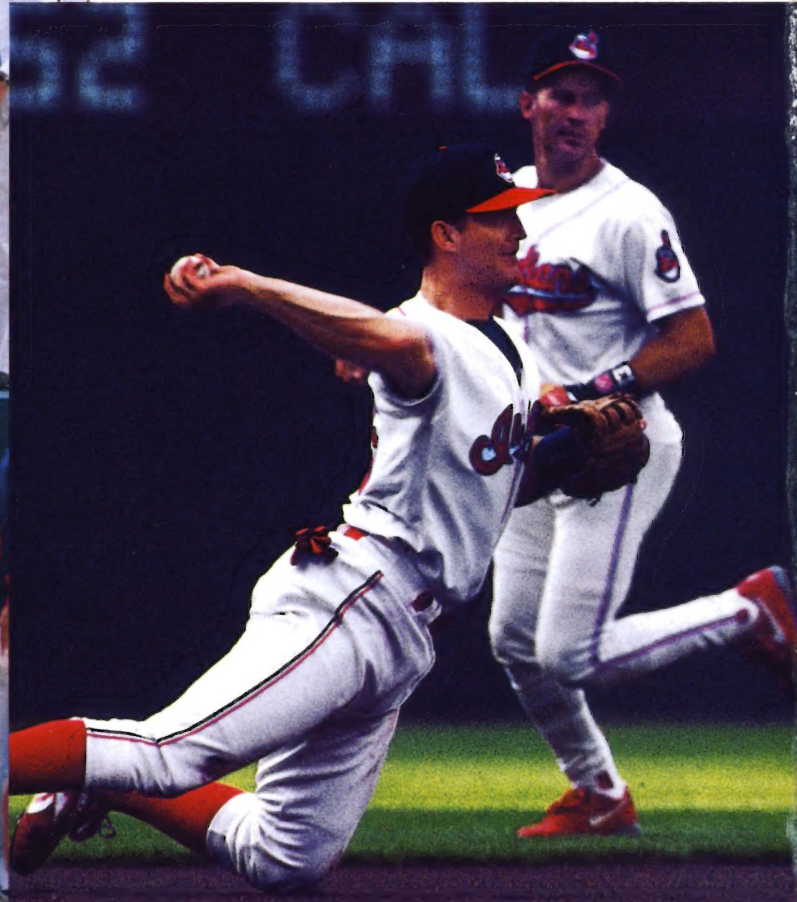
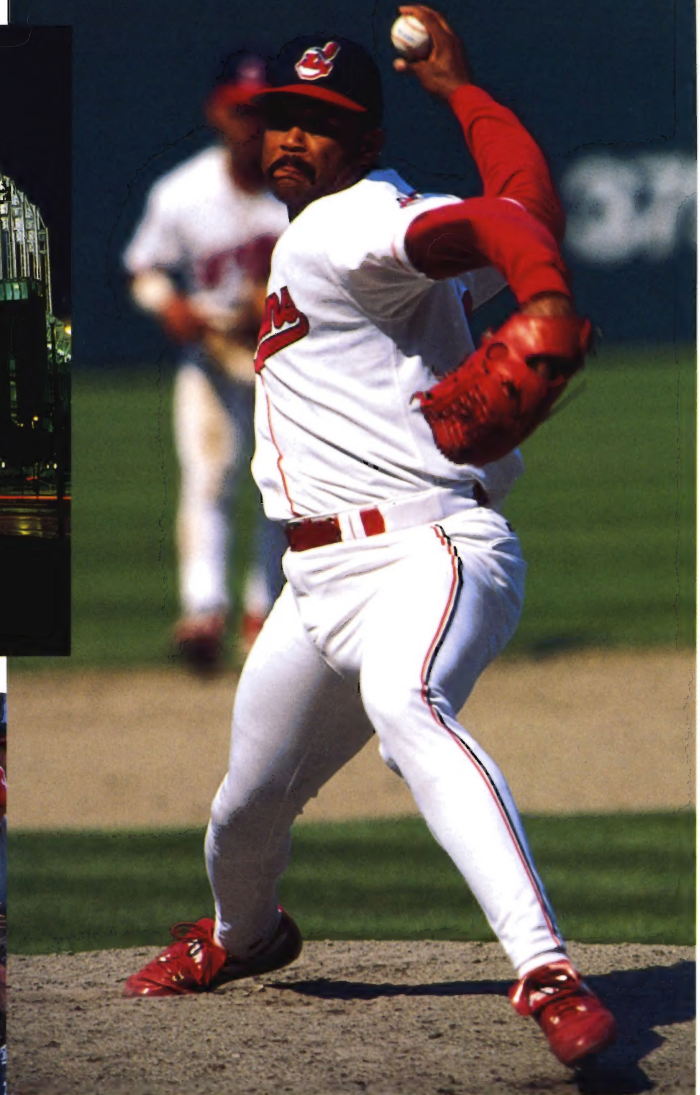








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Make a difference.

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